

*Horror in Culture & Entertainment*

# RUE MARQUE

## THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

INTERVIEWS WITH

DAN O'BANNON

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## DEATH PHOTOGRAPHY

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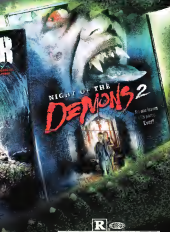
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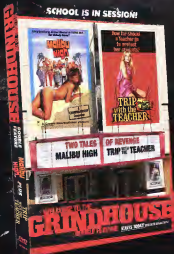
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Rated R - 16+ indicates - 1979 - Color - Removable Subscreen (1.76:1)

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Filed 11/04/16 Page 11 of 11  
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## Prime Evil

**Starring William Beckwith, Christine Moore, Mavis Harris and Max Jacobs**

<sup>7</sup>A group of evil monks surface in New York City sacrificing humans left and right to Lord Satan. Fortunately, a brave and determined nun infiltrates the sect in an attempt to end the immortals' demonic sacrifices.

Order 2—55 (revision)—2004—Color—44 pages—\$10.00 (U.S.)

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Starring James Westmoreland (Stacey), Flo Gerrish, Ben Frank, and Nicholas Worth  
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Vietnam veteran/photographer terrorizes Los Angeles by going around strangling young women in their homes while taunting psychologist Lindsay Gale by calling her radio call-in show to describe his misogynistic ways. Meanwhile, the police detectives are close behind the psycho hoping he'll slip up and make a mistake.

Red Bull® – 600 milliliters – 1997 – Color – Approximate Midwestern (U.S.) Price



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## THE DAY THE DEAD RAWKED THE EARTH

*They're back from the grave and ready to party!*

*Return of the Living Dead creator Dan O'Bannon lets Rue Morgue peek his braincells for the dirt on his '80s punk rock zombie classic. Plus: Interviews with Scream Queen Linnea Quigley, Allan "The Torman" Trautman and 45 Grave's Dinah Cancer.*

by Dave Alexander, Last Chance Lance, Chris Alexander and Lisa Ladouceur

## THE LOST ART OF DEATH PHOTOGRAPHY

*Dr. Stanley Burns, an expert on the esoteric art of taking portraits of the deceased, exposes the birth, life and afterlife of post-mortem photography.*

by Last Chance Lance

## BLOODBATH ON THE BAYOU

*Haïcher director Adam Green goes deep into the swamp on a mission to make slasher movies fun again.*

by John W. Bowen

## FANTASIA 2007: FESTIVAL WRAP-UP

*Selected reviews from this year's programme of dark cinema.*  
by Dave Alexander, Stuart Andrews, Emma Anderson, Michele Galgano, Monica S. Kuchler, Chris Todd and Jovanek Vackovic

## TRAPPED IN A PARADISE LOST

*In BioShock, gamers face mutated humans in a decaying underwater city.*

by Monica S. Kuchler

## MILD-MANNERED MURDERER

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by Monica S. Kuchler

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# Note From Underground



"Zombies, man, they creep me out." With those few words, Dennis Hopper's character in George Romero's *Land of the Dead* managed to capture the simplicity of our continuing fascination with one of genre cinema's oldest residents. Oddly, unlike vampires (who have an even older pedigree in horror fiction), zombies have yet to overstay their welcome in the movies, despite their overwhelming numbers. That's because the living dead are an extremely versatile bunch, cheap and easy to invent and reinvent with new motivations—over and over again.

Generally speaking, the zombie has evolved through what I view as three major movie periods, with a few soft outs in between. The first, which can be traced as far back as 1930 with Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, concerned itself with zombies as mindless automatons carrying out the sinister deeds of some mind-control practitioner. Yet the term "zombie" itself had yet to be coined. The word officially entered the English language in 1929 in *The Magic Island*, journalist/explorer/occultist William B. Seabrook's questionable travelogue which examined Haitian beliefs, chiefly voodoo. The offering of bad journalism or not, that particular superstition soon came to bear in the movies, notably with Victor Halperin's Bela Lugosi-led *White Zombie* (1932), often considered the first "zombie movie," though, in my opinion, *Caligari*, lacking only the voodoo aspect and the word itself, actually deserves that distinction.

During this initial wave, the zombies in question were not necessarily revived corpses, but rather enslaved, catatonic human beings. Among such films are Halperin's disappointing return to the theme *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), Jean YVES's early horror-comedy *King of the Zombies* (1941), Jacques Tourneur's understated *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) and even Del Tenney's ridiculous *Zombie Blood-bath* (1964)—later reassured under the fabulously advertised grindhouse title *I Eat Your Skin*.

Bridging the gap between the first and second wave are movies such as Hammer's *Phylogeny of the Zombies* (1966), where the trappings of voodoo continue to manifest, but this time it's made pretty clear that the monsters are, in fact, reanimated corpses. Blank stares are replaced by menacing, rotting faces and thrills and chills replaced by creepiness and subtle horror. That is, until George Romero decided to give them an appetite for destruction.

While waning interest in relatively "safe" voodoo-driven zombie stories threatened to leave the living dead in the lurch, Romero single-handedly reannated them with his groundbreaking *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), an apocalyptic tale (lifted directly from Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*) in which the undead—for the first time—have government of their own bodies, and are driven solely by some very serious, feroocious instinct to consume us alive. It's here that the zombie assumed its most notorious incarnation: a merciless undead cannibal. *Night* and its sequels' over-analyzed metaphors notwithstanding, this period is notable for its graphic violence and genuine terror.

In the intervening years between *Night of the Living Dead* and its many imitators, up to and including Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* and Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, this brand of ultra-gory apocalyptic zombie film flourished. A legion of flesh-hungry cadaver trunks appeared, from *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972) to Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 2* (1979) which, interestingly, renewed the voodoo theme and married it to the newborn flesh-eating ghoul quite successfully.

Then, in 1985, the dead began to speak and think. This third and final major step in the evolution of the zombie effectively began with Romero's EC Comics-styled *Dawn of the Dead* and was further bolstered by Dan O'Bannon's punk rock zombie comedy *The Return of the Living Dead*, released just a few months later. The films shared some similarities (the cognate dead) but unlike Romero's ghasts, O'Bannon's were unstopable and hysterical, which only made them that much more popular. More importantly, it marked the beginning of a new era of zombie, the brain-muncher. That's right, it's with O'Bannon's *Return* that the living dead first specifically craved grey matter—a remedy to the pain of being dead.

Because of this obvious adaptability, zombies continue to enjoy limitless employment opportunities as movie monsters. Their ontological status (voodoo, virus, toxin, radiation) as well as their palate (flesh, brains, or simply to nannish infection) are open to interpretation, meaning those cold, rotting bodies will pretty much never go away. And as long as filmmakers can keep reviving dead people in interesting ways, we'll probably welcome them to our warm flesh until we're buried in a bonedead ourselves.

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**COVER: THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD**  
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# Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

**FROM THE MOMENT** Rob Zombie leaked that poorly written *Halloween* screenplay to the web, most intelligent horror fans suspected this would be a misguided debacle from a guy who clearly has no understanding of the original film, and who comes across as Beavis and Butt-head with his criticisms of it. I grew tired of hearing his arrogant nitpicking about Carpenter's *Halloween* months ago, and now I have to endure it in the pages of my beloved *Rue Morgue*, too. I am very disappointed that you put something like this on your cover, especially after that thoughtful editorial in the post detailing the care and consideration taken when deciding upon a cover.

**Rob Thomas** – New Castle, Delaware

**THANKS** for the insightful interview with Rob Zombie regarding his *Halloween* remake. It must be hard difficult for the interviewer to tiptoe around the sensitivities of a conflicted narcissist like Zombie, a man who seems to follow his own creative vision, but who is also obviously struggling with the negative input he's recently received from focus groups. A man who claims to love the original *Halloween*, but who also insists on honoring Carpenter's masterwork at several points throughout the interview, stating his intent to change the plot, tone and style substantially. A man who rips on fans who are loyal to Donald Pleasence's presence in the franchise ("Like, did they ever hear of Donald Pleasence before *Halloween*?" asks Zombie, a man who presumes his fans have somehow managed to avoid *THX1138*, *From Beyond the Grave*, *Tales that Witness Madness* and *Faustian Voyage*.) Some might argue that the franchise was already dead, but if it ever had a chance to rise from the grave, Zombie's remake is certainly going to be the final nail in its coffin.

**Ryan Daley** – Salt Lake City, Utah

**RE: RM#70:** I liked the *Halloween* cover and the story but besides that, the rest sucked.

I am sick of cheesy horror films with B-rated acting and naked women! What is it with these screwed-up straight-to-DVD, so-called horror movies like *The Possession of Carl Bennett*? How many more stupid movies about possessed women do we need? I am sick of all these female vampires and zombies, psychotic witches, and ghosts of little girls in dresses. Women are just not scary! I'm glad crap like *Goth Girls*, *Mormon Girls* and *Catholic Ghoulies* got "overlooked and forgotten." They are not the kinds of movies I want to see or read about. I have enjoyed some of your magazines but I wish I could get a refund on a few issues I hated.

**Rachel R.** – address withheld

**RE: NOTE** From Underground #69: For me, at 33 years old, I still can't talk about the horrible things that happened to me growing up. It is too awful to remember. I think watching horror movies helps me deal with those things. I also like the movie *I Spent My Year in a Grave*, which I saw at a very young age. I know for a fact no male could understand any of this; maybe only ones that have been raped. I also have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and think there is a satisfaction to watching someone else being hurt or tortured, because I do better understand what happened to me. This is very complex for most people to understand.

**Tina L.** – Carlisle, Ohio

**RE: NOTE** From Underground #69. I know how the contempt and disgust and feeling of injustice eats away at the flesh and mind of a rape victim because I am also a rape victim (many times over, like the woman who wrote the original letter) but the circumstances were different, as I am a male who went through it 25 years ago. While I do think that most men (of a mature age with higher education) find it almost unbearable to sit through the rape scenes of *Last House on the Left*, *I Spent My Year in a Grave* and *Axe*, I do agree that they surely if ever identify with the vic-

tim because they, like myself, were not raised in a society that nurtured understanding of such a crime. I don't think that the average young male today knows how to react to the above mentioned movies in any other way than to relate to the aggressor and the male gaze instead of sympathizing with what the female victim is going through onscreen, and what she will be forced to deal with afterwards (after the revenge part, I mean – the psychological baggage she has been saddled with during the rape scene). Thank you for your in-depth response to something that eats away at the inside of some of us (men and women alike) like a cancer that might diminish over time, and through the cathartic act of watching rape/revenge movies, but will never fully heal.

**A Horror Fan**

**RE: RM#69:** In spite of the cover story on *The Monster Squad* (which I read anyway, but don't have any intentions of buying when comes out – can you say kiddie horror film?), I still enjoy your magazine. How about a cover story on *The Burning* instead?

**Ron Ferrell** – McDermott, Ohio

**MONSTER SQUAD** on the cover? Simply amazing. That classic image really hit my soul with a warm nostalgia and I'm so glad you used it. I have an extra kick in my step now that it has finally been properly released on DVD. *RM#69* will forever be a companion piece to this long-awaited release. You guys have definitely breathed even more life into this deserving gem and that means a lot to me.

**Adam Veselisin** – address withheld



# Deadlines

News Highlights



Horror Happenings

## The Search for the Next Elvira begins this October

With her impossibly high beehive hairdo, slimy black widow dress, gravity-defying cleavage and deliciously dark sense of humor, there is only one Elvira: Mistress of the Dark. Or at least there will be until completion of the upcoming Fox Reality TV series *The Search for the Next Elvira*.

Cassandra Peterson, who turns 58 this month, created the character and has been playing her since the early 1980s.

"The show isn't a search to replace me as Elvira, it's the search to find another Elvira—the first of many we hope—because I'd like to create an entire army of cloned Elviras to take over the world," she jokes. "If not the world, then at least just be out and about at various malls and venues around Halloween."

Peterson, feeling the pressure of having to be Elvira around-the-clock while also making time to be with her twelve-year-old daughter, devised the typically far-out scheme to both solve this macabre multi-tasking dilemma and update her creation.

"What started happening to me in the last few years—and it was really starting to piss me off—was that people would continually ask me if I was the 'real' one, and I'd go, 'Yeah, hello, there's only one!'" Peterson recalls. "I started thinking that I am kinda like Santa Claus, in that there's so much artifice going on there with wigs, makeup, costume, that, hell, your grandma could be Elvira if she tried hard enough. So we're getting a bunch of official, sanctioned Elviras that we train, putting them through an extensive boob camp, er, I mean boob camp, then send them out to make the personal appearances, signing autographs, posing for photographs. A really sweet little gig if you ask me!"



A cavalcade of curvy horror honeys compete to become one of many official new Elviras

*The Search for the Next Elvira* sees Peterson—in character—holding court along with two detectable drag queen Elvira look-alikes ("my evil handmaidens," she jokes), judging a cavalcade of curvy, horror-loving honeys spouting double entendres and cranking themselves into costume. A sort of morbid, cheeky spin on *American Idol*, the show will be presented as a three-part series airing in October with a fourth "climax" episode to screen live on Halloween night that encourages viewers to vote on the finalists via text messages and emails.

Though some might argue that hiring a gaggle of Elvira impersonators might damage the credibility of one of the world's most celebrated B-cinema personalities, Peterson—who's currently shopping around a self-penned script for her third Elvira film

(following 1990's *Elvira Mistress of the Dark* and 2002's *Elvira's Haunted Hills*)—sees it differently.

"I really don't think this stunt will hurt the character at all, rather it will open it up, deepen its legacy," she insists. "This is simply the next chapter of my Elvira journey, and again, I stress that these will be approved look-alikes and must believe the way that we train them. In this case, they must behave as badly as possible. But the character—she or he, it could be a guy, who knows?—has to be consistent."

For up-to-date information on the series and to see which local strippers will be carrying *The Search for the Next Elvira*, call Fox Reality's toll-free hotline at 1-877-859-REAL or go to [elvira.com](http://elvira.com).

Chris Alexander



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# The Molotov Theatre Group revives Grand Guignol in a series of new plays

## Dreadlines

More than a century before the *Saw* franchise promised us, "Oh, yes. There will be blood," Le Théâtre du Grand-Guignol was presenting torturous deaths and spilling flux crimson for macabre-minded Parisians. Now, the Molotov Theatre Group, a Washington, DC collective of horror-loving thespians, aims to bring back the notorious blood show with all new plays in the Grand Guignol tradition.

"Reviving the Grand Guignol for us is exciting, first of all because it's been horribly neglected," says Executive Artistic Director Tara Garwood, who co-founded the group with friends Lucas Maloney and Alex Zavistovich. "Horror and that darker side of humanity is something that we as a culture stuff down and ignore, pretend like it isn't there. And so we feel that it's important to explore that side of our nature."

The original Grand Guignol was opened in France in 1897 by playwright and former police clerk Oscar Méténier. It was a small playhouse located in a cul-de-sac in Montmartre, one of Paris' less savoury neighbourhoods. There, its company performed short theatrical pieces characterized by brutal acts of violence and the spilling of copious amounts of stage blood – depictions of slashed throats, graphic brain surgery, eyes gouged out by scissors, acid thrown in faces, and so on. It was a wildly popular form of horror theatre patronized largely by the working class. Ignored by scholars because of its populist appeal, it fell into critical disfavour and rarely saw its repertoire remounted after the theatre closed its doors in 1962.

Molotov joins a couple of other theatre groups – notably San Francisco's Thrillpeddlars, who have been around for over a decade – dedicated to writing Grand Guignol scripts, staging new Grand Guignol-styled pieces, and mounting contemporary or classic plays which invoke Grand Guignol themes.

The company made its debut this past July during DC's Fringe Festival with a performance of *For Boston*, a macabre play co-

written by Maloney and Michael McMahon. Garwood describes it as "a horrifically dark comedy about sex, booze, friendship and crowbars." The troupe plans to formally announce itself in a three-week run this October with three classic Guignol pieces: *The Lighthouse Keeper* (1905) by Paul Amice and Paul Cloquemin, *Kicks, or Doing the Deed* (1908) by René Berton, and *The Final Kiss* (1912) by Maurice Level. All are based on English-language translations from the original French taken from scholars Richard J. Hand and Michael Wilson's book *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror* – the only history of the movement still in print.

As far as the availability of scripts, Garwood admits, "There's not much to go on, which makes it more challenging but also more exciting because it gives us the ability to experiment. 'What works here? Let's try this, let's try that.' It's kind of like solving a mystery. There's a lot of detective work involved."

Whether or not modern audiences accustomed to seeing acts of violence in popular entertainment will be as shocked as the patrons who attended these plays in the late 1800s remains to be seen, but Garwood is hopeful.

"We admittedly have quite a challenge with this because our audiences are much more inured to seeing acts of violence than they were back then," she admits. "When the Grand Guignol opened, they would advertise that they had a doctor in the house



The Molotov Theatre Group (left to right) Tara Garwood, Lucas Maloney and Alex Zavistovich

in case anyone felt faint. And people would pass out. So I think if we could achieve that, that would be the ultimate goal."

Working in Molotov Theatre's favour, Garwood believes, is the medium itself. "Even though we are more inured to seeing horror, we are still more used to seeing it in film," she says. "And film doesn't have quite the same immediacy as seeing it live right in front of you. It's a different medium and therefore it affects you in a different way. There are the sights, the sounds, the smells, there's everything."

For more information, go to [molotovtheatre.com](http://molotovtheatre.com).

Sean Plummer

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# Dreadlines

## ROADKILL

FROM THE  
INFO HIGHWAY

searchman.com

Sean Herman's collection of luscious colour tattoos will put some tamar in your blood – literally. The artist fits right in with the rest of the talented horror-loving ghoulies at Brandon Bond's notorious All or Nothing Tattoo in Atlanta, Georgia, but stands out in terms of his wacky, blood-drenched style.

occasionalhell.com

Occasional Hell is an extensive illustrated listing of the implements of torture. With a page devoted to each device, visitors can not only learn how they were used and when, but can purchase the Torture Device Coloring Book as a souvenir. Also check out the site's rather cool morbid home design projects, such as the mortuary coffee table.

houseofdarkness.com/

Modern Ruins Photography.html

While House of Darkness primarily focuses on low light, evening and nighttime photography, it also has a superb Modern Ruins section that features images captured in and around abandoned hospitals and industrial and commercial buildings, making this an excellent study of architectural decay.

darksectorgame.blogspot.com

For those who want take their video-gaming experience one step further, Dark Sector's development team at Digital Extremes (Iowa), Pariah have created a blog to give gamers a candid peek into the process, including some great entries about video game sound design, etc.

jchandler.com/tombstone

Do you ever fantasize about what your future grave marker might say? Now you can get your very own preview with the Tombstone Generator. Simply enter up to five lines of text then see them superimposed on a gravestone. Commemorate yourself today!



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Compiled by Monica S. Kuchler  
Got a Roadkill suggestion?

E-mail: link to [roadkill@rue-morgue.com](mailto:roadkill@rue-morgue.com)

## Joe Dante recruits genre filmmakers for classic horror trailer commentaries

"Tell a friend! Tell two friends! Trailers are your best form of entertainment!" Joe Dante proclaims with a feverish ballyhoo that seems appropriate for the filmmaker's latest project, Trailers from Hell.

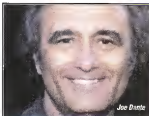
Recently launched, Trailers from Hell presents vintage horror and exploitation trailers for viewing on the internet and via Sprint cellphones – but with a twist. Short, concise commentaries have been added to the site's vintage movie ads by respected genre filmmakers, including John Landis, Edgar Wright, Mick Garris, Mary Lambert and Dante himself, offering a wealth of personal reminiscences and behind-the-scenes info – or at least as much as can be crammed into two-and-a-half-minutes.

"I've been collecting films on 16mm and 35mm for years, including 100 or so trailers," says Dante, who began his own filmmaking career as a trailer editor for Roger Corman's infamous B-movie factory, New World Pictures, before going on to make *The Howling*, *Gremlins*, *The 'burbs* and, most recently, two *Masters of Horror* episodes. "These trailers aren't doing anyone any good sitting in a vault at the Motion Picture Academy – this stuff was seen!"

Dante says his fascination with the understated showmanship of trailers stretches back to when he was a kid, but he really came under the spell of the medium when arriving in Hollywood in the 1970s.

"There were a lot of collectors who would put on Trailer Manthons at midnight amid wafts of mind-altering, non-tobacco products," he recalls. "Trailers can distill the essence of a film or misrepresent it completely, as we so often used to do at New World. It's really cinematic hunk, an art in itself when well done."

The site's real attraction for horror fans are the insightful and enthusiastic commentaries by the well-known filmmakers, who have been dubbed the "grindhouse gurus." Some tracks, like Mick Garris' take on William Castle's *House on Haunted Hill*, are highly informative and help place the films in the context of their era, while others reveal a more personal connection, such as John Lan-



Joe Dante

dis' commentary for the filmed teen concert *The T.A.M.I. Show*, which he actually attended as a youngster. (So far, Dante's own contributions include Corman's *The Terror* and the mad scientist movie *The Uncanny*.)

"We usually just ask them to select some titles they'd like to talk about, and then we go about seeing if we can locate the material," explains Dante, who admits that the site is weighted mostly toward genre films, since they seem to have the most extreme trailers. "We don't know what anybody's going to say in advance. In fact, we simply trust them that they even have anything to say! But it's worked out pretty well so far, even when we corral someone like Edgar Wright to participate at the last minute, just before his plane left for Europe! These movies leave indelible marks, and people like to talk about them."

Through Trailers from Hell, Dante hopes to release three new classic coming attractions reels with commentary each week, and eventually add additional notable names to his lineup of knowledgeable gurus, such as B-movie veteran Larry Cohen. Dante also wants to give viewers a taste of the technical skill and unique artistry that goes into the creation of these trailers.

"Along the way I hope to get into interesting ephemera like trailer voice-over artists and how these ads are made," he explains.

The trailers, both with and without commentary, are available through the Fun Little Movies Sprint mobile channel, as well as at [trailersfromhell.com](http://trailersfromhell.com).

Paul Corupe

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## Weird Stats Morbid Facts

+ In the 1700s, consumption (now known as tuberculosis) was treated with one of two concoctions: the first involved snakes being boiled in milk, and the second consisted of woodlice boiled in ale.

+ Jean Brooks, star of Val Lewton's *The Seventh Victim*, succumbed to alcoholism and faded into obscurity in the years following the film's release. When she died in 1963, at the age of 46, not a single obituary ran for her in any Hollywood paper.

+ When Petre Toma, resident of a small Romanian village, died in 2003, his fellow villagers became so convinced that he was a vampire and that his corpse rose from the grave to feed on them, that they exhumed his body and cut out his heart.

+ Following university, Clive Barker toured with theatrical productions of *Dog, Nightmares* and *The History of the Devil*, plays he wrote in the Grand Guignol tradition.

+ Just as coloured roses today signify different things, so did various flowers and plants in Victorian times, including basil, which represented hatred, and bell-berry which suggested treachery.

+ John Landis once confessed to Dario Argento that he'd decided to go into directing after seeing the Italian filmmaker's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*.

+ Each year, burials in the US are responsible for the release of 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid into the environment.

+ Christopher Lee won the role of The Creature in Hammer's 1957 film *The Curse of Frankenstein* primarily because he was bigger and taller than almost all other British actors of the time.

+ In August of 2004, a single bolt of lightning killed more than 31 cows in Denmark.

+ Wes Craven was a teacher who specialized in English and Humanities before embarking on his career as a filmmaker.

+ The military practice of draping flags over coffins had its genesis during the Civil War when there were no caskets left to hold the dead and flags were used to cover corpses.

+ The song "Hey Man, Nice Shot" by industrial rock group Filter was penned in reaction to the public suicide of Pennsylvania state treasurer Budd Dwyer on January 22, 1987. Dwyer had been convicted of receiving illegal monetary kickbacks but claimed innocence right up until his death.

+ A Belgian man was arrested this past July after one of his dinner guests discovered the bodies of his wife and son in the freezer while putting away leftovers from the party.

Compiled by Monica S. Kaebler

Get a weird stat or morbid fact?

Send it through to [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com).

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1. *The Shining*  
Undead dink shrinker
2. *I Spit on Your Grave*  
Romantic bubble bath penecctomy
3. *A Nightmare on Elm Street*  
Freddy's unfriendly fingers
4. *The Changeling*  
Joseph's tortured tub thumping
5. *Body Snatchers*  
E.T. teardril trap
6. *Shivers*  
Cronenberg's perverted parasite



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About to lose your soul in a late-night poker game? You can always lighten the mood with one of these movie-themed playing card decks featuring rare images from *Dawn of the Dead*, *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Devilish decks available from [nmrdist.com](http://nmrdist.com)

## KNIFE CABINET

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For the maniacal slasher who's also a neat-freak, this cabinet provides a handy place to store your blades when you're not slicing up teens. Inspired by the "sword cabinet" of stage magicians, it holds five blades of varying sizes, which hang over a cowering figure at the bottom.

Stash your stab tools courtesy [thewirelesscatalogue.com](http://thewirelesscatalogue.com)



## THE BURNING T-SHIRT

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Wear your love for retro-slasher flicks on your sleeve — or your chest — with a T-shirt from the House of Mysterious Secrets. The Burning design showcases original artwork by Jeff Zornow and will help keep you toasty while fleeing through the woods from a disfigured maniac.

Sport a slasher at [houseofmysterioussecrets.com](http://houseofmysterioussecrets.com)

## SKULL CUPCAKE PAN

\$5.95 each

Discover your inner domestic ghoul with these sweet 'n' sepulchral cupcake pans. They're non-stick and dishwasher safe, so you can lurk in the corner snacking on the fruits of your labour without having to worry about them rotting in the sink.

Let the dead rise at [pushindaisies.com](http://pushindaisies.com)





**New horror is coming to FEARnet.  
(Try to control yourself.)**

Get ready, horror fans. This fall, FEARnet On Demand will have the cable premieres of *High Tension*, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, and *Open Water 2*. Original programming, including *Catacombs* and *30 Days of Night: Blood Trails*. Plus, dozens of new films. All free, 24/7. Find us at FEARnet On Demand, or at [FEARnet.com](http://FEARnet.com). Plastic slipcovers not included.

**FEAR**.NET

THEY'RE BACK FROM THE GRAVE AND **READY TO PARTY!**

JUST PRIOR TO A COLLECTOR'S EDITION DVD RELEASE, *THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD* CREATOR **DAN O'BANNON** ALLOWS RUE MORGUE TO PICK HIS BRAAAIINS FOR ALL THE DIRT ON HIS REVISIONIST '80s PUNK ROCK ZOMBIE CLASSIC.



**F**or an underage horror fan in the late '80s, fewer fruits were sweeter or more forbidden than *The Return of the Living Dead*. There were punks, there were zombies, there were even punk rock

zombies, and rumour had it that one of them even got completely naked – and you could pause your VCR and see *everything*. Then there was the gore. You heard it was gross: bodies were diced, brains were eaten, there





It Hurts To Be Dead: Scott (Brian Peck) gets his brains munchied by the half-corpsed woman

"I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF DOING IT AS MIXED GENRE. GIVE IT THE CORE, GIVE IT THE MONSTERS, BUT MAKE IT FUNNY, MAKE IT A COMEDY, AND THAT'LL DISTINGUISH IT FROM ALL THE OTHER STUFF ON THE MARKET." **DAN O'BANNON**

was a split-dog that was still alive, and there was something truly hideous in the basement called the "Taman." If nothing else, you just had to find out about this Taman.

Eventually, you'd get your nervous hands on a well-watched VHS copy and, amazingly, somehow *The Return of the Living Dead* actually exceeded expectations. The punks were as cool and crude as the soundtrack, the special effects were awesome — from the disgusting brain-munchers to the bisected dog to the slimy, jaw-dropping spectacle of the Taman. It was violent, explosive and — holy hellfire! — there really was full frontal zombie nudity. With "Do you wanna passer-tay!" from 45 Grave's soundtrack song "Party Time" (see sidebar, p.22) resonating in your head, you realized that a zombie movie didn't have to be dead serious. It could be rebellious undead fun.

The man behind it: Dan O'Bannon. After breaking into the business by co-writing the sci-fi cult comedy *Dark Star* with John Carpenter, and doing effects work on *Star Wars*, O'Bannon became famous for penning *Alien*. He then wrote the screenplay for Gary Sherman's *Dead & Buried* and one of the stories in the animated *Heavy Metal* movie, and created the super-hell-copter-themed action flick (and later TV show) *Blue Thunder*. Then, in 1984, he was approached by producers who owned a zombie script from *Night of the Living Dead* co-writer John Russo,

called *The Return of the Living Dead*. Tobe Hooper was attached to direct (before dropping out and handing the reins to O'Bannon), but the screenplay didn't work.

O'Bannon started from scratch with the notion of rebooting the subgenre that Russo and George Romero invented with a pacing inspired by the screwball comedies of Howard Hawks.

O'Bannon's zombies played by different rules. Those that could, ran, talked and strategized ("Send more paramedics, f---; they couldn't be killed by destroying the brain; their bites were deadly but not infectious; and they didn't eat your guts — just your grey matter, in order to ease 'the pain of being dead.'") Here, the popular notion of zombies-as-brain-eaters was born.

O'Bannon also channelled his love of EC Comics into the appropriately cartoonish cause of the outbreak. In Louisville, Kentucky, a misplaced military container holding a corpse and a mysterious reanimating agent called Thoom 2-4-5 leaks, infecting a couple of stooges working at a medical supply warehouse (James Karen and Thom Mathews) and unleashing the hideous Tarmen (Alan Trautman, see p.20). Thanks to the

warehouse owner (veteran character actor Qu Gulager) and a shifty funeral home operator (the amazingly bug-eyed Don Calfa), the contagion spreads via the crematory smoke to the nearby "Resurrection Cemetery." It's here that a group of punks are partying, and actress Linnea Quigley (see p.18) became the Scream Queen of teenaged boys' dreams as she grave-danced in the buff.



Truly the ground zero of badass zombie flicks, *Return of the Living Dead* did well in theatres, beating Romero's own *Day of the Dead*, which also opened in 1985. On video, however, *Return* built its genuine cult following, and after being relegated to disintegrating rental tapes for far too long, it finally got a DVD release from MGM in 2003.

In the years following *Return*, O'Bannon was responsible for the script for Tobe Hooper's warped sci-fi vampires movie *Lifehouse* and alien movie *Invasion From Mars*, plus the blockbuster *Total Recall*, as well as smaller genre titles *Blooders* and *Screamers*. He directed one other film to date, the Lovecraft adaptation *The Resurrected* (1992).

Laid low in recent years by an infelicitous ailment, his output has diminished. His love for *The Return of the Living Dead*, however, has not. From his home in California, a mere day after undergoing surgery, the strongly opinionated filmmaker talks about the film and MGM's special edition re-release.





Major Moritz (left) the moribund (center) and the Major (right) in the original *Night of the Living Dead* (above) and the *Return of the Living Dead* (below) (Mike Mendez gets ready to put the bits on *Seaside* (Mike Mendez)).

**Given that you were taking a much different approach to a popular subgenre, were you aiming to make a bona fide cult hit, or did it just kinda happen?**

I wasn't so focused on whether or not it might become a favourite over time; I was more concerned about the fact that [during pre-production], in 1984, the market was absolutely saturated by a whole bunch of horror films. Every theatre was just full of low-budget horror, and I thought if I make a straight, serious horror film it'll be lost in the avalanche of other straight low-budget horror films. That's how I came up with the idea of doing it as a mixed genre: give it the gore, give it the monsters, but make it funny, make it a comedy, and that'll distinguish it from all the other stuff on the market. And I had another reason for wanting to do it as a comedy: this project was offered to me simply as a title. The independent producers had bought the rights to the title. There was a screenplay by John Russo, which they rejected in its entirety, and they wanted a new screenplay, and I was working with Tobe Hooper, who was going to direct it but subsequently had to drop out. I don't remember the exact wording, but early in the writing I said, "How about making it funny?" and Tobe says, "Yeah, man, go for it." At the same time, George Romero announced that he was going to make another dead movie, and I thought, "Geez, I don't want to make a real sequel to *Night of the Living Dead* because I'll be intruding on Romero's turf."

**If the producers bought the rights to Russo's story, they must've expected, on some level, a Romero-type film, right?**

I wasn't obliged to stay out of Romero's universe, but that was what [the producers] expected; they wanted an unauthorized sequel in a way it was

[technically] authorized because when Romero and Russo, who wrote the original *Night of the Living Dead*, split up, they made a contract in which Romero had the right to go off and make zombie movies without Russo, and Russo got to write his own screenplay called, specifically, *The Return of the Living Dead*. And that's how it landed in my lap. I thought, "I gotta get as far as I can from Romero's world," not only to distinguish my film, but frankly I just don't care much for artistic poaching.

**And that's why at the beginning of your film there's the line about how "Night of the Living Dead got it wrong?"**

I wanted to clear the air so that anyone who sat down and watched the movie would right away see that this isn't a Romero film at all.

**The *Return of the Living Dead* and *Day of the Dead* came out the same year and your movie made double at the box office what Romero's did. Was it a sign of the times that theatre-goers embraced the comedy more? Were '80s horror fans in more of a party mood?**

I couldn't say, because I thought *Day of the Dead* was a pretty strong offering. I don't really know, except for that one single factor: that the market at the time was overloaded with straight, serious horror films.

**As in *Day of the Dead*, the military wreaks more havoc than the zombies. Were you making a statement?**

To tell you the truth, I don't make social commentary films. That's not my vein, I'm not out to teach the world to be good or run through my list of pet peeves. But to some extent I was influenced by the fact that Romero's dead weren't supernatural. They weren't some type of ghosts. It's rather ambiguous in [*Night of the Living Dead*] but it's science fiction; something in outer space causes this to happen. I think I may have been influenced by that. ... The producers told me that they wanted to see a house on a cliff with a military man, and they didn't know where to go with that. I took it and did the best I could with it.

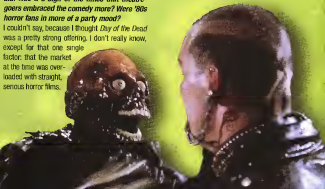
**Have you ever talked to Romero about the film?**

I've never met him, I've never spoken to him on the phone. I do know that when it was close to camera time for *Return of the Living Dead* he became alarmed because I got a letter from his attorney, and so did the producers. I wanted to reassure him that I was staying so far away from the material that it wasn't a problem, and I was very, very interested and curious to hear what he thought of the final film. I've heard mixed reports. If George wants to phone, write me a letter, to give me a piece of his mind, I welcome it. But he doesn't work in [LA] and he's hard to track down.

**It just so happens he'll be at our Festival of Fear this year.**

Tell him that Dan O'Bannon sends his best and hopes he isn't still mad.

**You've mentioned before that you wrote the script to play to original director Tobe Hooper's strengths and that you would've written it differently had you known at the time that you'd be directing it. Tell us how those versions would've differed.**



When actress **LINNEA QUIGLEY** doffed her duds and danced on a tomb in 1985, one of the genre's most popular scream queens was born.

# TRASH TALK

BY LAST CHANCE LANCE

THE  
RETURN OF  
THE  
LIVING DEAD  
RESURRECTED



though Linnea Quigley has appeared in nearly 100 movies, written two books about her career, fronts the post-punk band The Skirts and even has two fragrances named after her, for cult film fanatics she'll always hold a soft spot in the heart – and for many, a hard spot in the pants – for her breakthrough role in *Return of the Living Dead*. In the 1985 cult classic she plays Trash, the foul-mouthed, punk rock hottie who strips in a boneyard and gets attacked by a group of slobbing zombies, to rise again as a buck-naked brain-eater. *Rue Morgue* catches up with the only zombie chick we'd ever put the bits on.

**Did you actively seek out a career in the genre?**

I think horror found me. It was a time when a lot of horror movies were being made and I fit in. I do scared-and-screaming really well.

**What led to you being cast as Trash? Did it have anything to do with being in The Skirts?**

I had done *Silent Night*, *Deadly Night* and the same casting director brought me in to read for Trash when the production had stopped because the original girl who was supposed to play Trash got pregnant. I think being around the punk element at the clubs helped with the punk attitude.

**Every actor brings something of themselves to a role. Were you really a punk rock rebel exhibitionist?**

No, I was very shy. I was really punk. I had to stay "normal" for other acting and commercial work; I loved playing [punk music] and the scene.

**How was the look of Trash created? There's sort of a punk Ziggy Stardust thing going on there.**

I must say that Dan O'Benion did 90 percent of everything. He was exact [as to] where the skeleton would be on my shorts; he wanted to cut my hair but I got the hair dresser to say that it wouldn't stay up in the rain, so I didn't have to cut it. I wouldn't shave my eyebrows, though, and I had a wig!

**Your two books *I'm Screaming as Fast as I Can* and *Chainsaw* contain some nasty recollections about filming *Rot10*. What first comes to mind when you think of the worst of lines? Rain machines: they were the worst. I was freezing. Being painted all white when I was dead was annoying.**

**What's your take on the "codpiece" the filmmakers had you wear? It seems sort of absurd now, yet in the mid-'80s full-frontal nudity wasn't as standard in low-budget horror as it seems to be today.**

Yeah, that's true – it was a huge no-no. I took a chance; I'd either be excommunicated or herded as avant-garde.

**Of course, nudity and monsters don't guarantee a hit. Why do you think the film did, and continues to do, so well?**

I think it captured a lot of comedy, along with the horror. All the horror scenes are really horrific, the cast clicked and the dialogue was right on. Dan is a great writer, he got the performances he wanted and the effects were amazing.

**You were impaled on a set of antlers in *Silent Night*, *Deadly Night* and ravaged by zombies in *Rot10* – of all your movies which stands out as your all-time favourite death scene?**

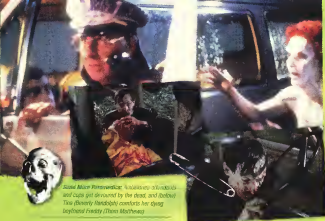
I think the antler; it was uncomfortable and I couldn't breathe, but it was pretty cool. Then there was Kevin Kenny's *Witchtrap*. I had a possessed shower head go through my neck!

**As a seasoned scream queen, do you think that the genre is turning away from exploitation or back towards it?**

Away from it. Women are kicking ass; the nudity is down, except for low-budget features. I think films like *Saw* and such show that the next wave is no nudity, more violence. ☹

*Additional interview material provided by Ramona Taylor*





*Acad Award Nominee: Aulovsky's stunts and caps got shrouded by the dead, and (below) Tina (Beverly D'Angelo) comforts her dying boyfriend Barry (Tony Gardner)*

I would've focused it more on the mummies of Guanajuato, Mexico. I would've had some Americans go into those caverns on the Day of the Dead. That would've been the day the foolish Americans entered the caves and the mummies would've come to life. Unfortunately, it would've been impossible to use the perfect title: *The Day of the Dead*. That's how different the story would've been. Also, I would've focused on one character as the hero. You can't really point to one character [in *The Return of the Living Dead*] as the protagonist. And, I knew that Tobe liked gore, so I wrote for gore.

***Of all the ambitious gore effects in the film, which one do you love the most?***

I'm most proud of the Tarman. In those days they didn't have CGI or any of that stuff. Stop-motion animation was crude so I knew it was going to have to be a man in a suit, and the problem that production designer William Stout and I worked on was how do you make a suit of a skeleton that doesn't look fat? When you put a costume on an actor it bulks out. So we did a couple of things: there were lots and lots of strands hanging down that obscured the body of the actor playing the thing, and as much as I could I stayed against a black background because then the rest of his body would fade into the background and you'd be left only with glimpses of ribcage and other stuff, with lots and lots of crap hanging down to obscure that. I think it was done magnificently.

***You must've been pretty happy with the way the female half-zombie turned out, as well.*** Tony Gardner did the half-woman on the table. That was a life-size puppet, and he only had a week to do it. It just knocked my socks right off. I think I kissed it, it was so good. I think the only thing I told him, to put in my two cents, was, "I know she's a rotten cadaver, but give her beautiful blue eyes."

***You've also mentioned in the past that you were less than impressed with some of the effects.***

As for the effect that I like the least, well, some of the zombie costumes that come up from the ground — we just didn't have the time. In fact, some of them look like Halloween masks.

***The film is iconic for the way it marries the zombie subgenre to those images of punk rock — in its characters, soundtrack and that poster. Why punk?***

It's simpler I like to be different. There were all these Halloween imitations out and they always starred a bunch of cute teenagers who, one-by-one, got offed by the villain, and these teenagers were clean-cut to a point where it was painful. I said away with the clean-cut teenagers I'll give you your teenagers but they're gonna be an assortment of punk rockers, and one girl — the girlfriend — was clean-cut. Why she would tang around with them, I dunno.

***According to comments you made on the first DVD commentary, it was a pretty hellish shoot, including some serious friction between you and Cu Guliger.***

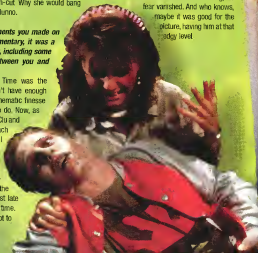
It was very tough. Time was the enemy, we just didn't have enough time to do all the cinematic finesse that I'd have liked to do. Now, as for Cu, it is true that Cu and I had agitated each other. Today Cu and I love each other, just ask him. But he came onto that picture as the best-established actor in the cast, and he was cast late and he didn't have time. ... By the time we got to

the first night of shooting that included Cu, I was, of course, bring by fingers up to my elbows. And onto the set walks Cu Guliger in an absolutely perfect wardrobe; his haircut was perfect, everything was perfect. And I think Cu thought he was slumming on my movie, that he thought it was going to be a bad movie, that it was going to reflect badly on him. He cares very deeply about acting. Well, I do too! Among the things that I've done, I have been an actor. When I was an adolescent, I was in lots and lots of amateur stage plays. I did semi-professional acting in St. Louis, I acted in *Dark Star*.

***Just how heated did it get between you two?***

There came a time, about two-thirds of the way through shooting, where Cu just popped. I was asking him to do something and he didn't really understand, and he turned to everyone on set — the cast, the camera crew — and he points at me and says, "Don't you see what he's doing? He's trying to destroy us all!" Then everybody left the set. ... I was sitting alone and I was just stunned. Well, I actually became afraid of Cu after that. He was carrying around a piece of lead plumbing pipe for his character's weapon and I had the prop department substitute it for a rubber one that looked the same because I was afraid Cu was going to come after me with a pipe. Well, he didn't, but he was very uncomfortable. He said, "Where's the pipe I was using? I can't handle this, it's the wrong weight." So, sweating bullets, I gave him the lead pipe. Of course he didn't attack me. Finally the film gets finished and we have a screening for the cast and crew. Cu comes out after the film into the lobby, where I am, and he's got a big smile on his face and he's beaming, and he spreads his arms and I walked into his arms and we gave each other a big hug.

Once he knew what we were doing, his fear vanished. And who knows, maybe it was good for the picture, having him at that edgy level.



ALLAN TRAUTMAN spills his guts on playing one of the genre's most lovably disgusting undead mascots.

THE

# TARMAN COMETH

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

THE  
RETURN OF THE  
LIVING DEAD  
RESURRECTED



hat greasy, black, dripping hide. Those buggy cockle monster eyes perched above lifeless white teeth. The mangled, gargled voices belching "More brains!" Is there any fiend that chills the blood, triggers the gag reflex and warms the heart more than *The Return of the Living Dead's* Tarmen?

This brain-starved punk rock zombie from Dan O'Bannon's seminal 1985 horror-comedy classic was conceived by production designer William Stout (whose creature-making credits also include *Predator*, *Leviathan* and *Pan's Labyrinth*) and brought to life by Brooklyn native Allan Trautman, an Emmy Award-winning puppeteer and actor with a BA in both drama and physics. Beyond the script, however, which called for a performer who was tall and thin, Trautman's still not quite sure what spurred O'Bannon to cast him as a cannibal corpse.

"They needed someone physically matching me — that they could cover in bones and costume parts and he'd still look skinny," Trautman tells *Rue Morgue* over the phone from his California home. "I just did this walk and Dan basically said, 'You're hired!'"

In the film, the Tarmen is born from a damaged military container containing both a body and the noxious (fictional) Intron Z-4-5 nerve agent. As the container vents and exposes the corpse to the air, the body partially melts and... wakes up. With legs buckling, shoulders swinging wildly and skin dripping off, leaving a trail of black sludge, the Tarmen is on a quest for warm human brains. This monster ain't no mindless zombie, though.

"The script described how the creature's movements were such that he could easily fall apart at any second, and that he was only held together by the most tenuous of punk," explains Trautman. "But the most important thing that Dan told me when we were shooting was that he wanted to see this creature thinking, he didn't want a stupid zombie. So that scene in the basement when [the character of Tina] looked in the closet and the Tarmen grabs the witch and whatever, you can see the moments pass by in his head. I think that was an effective choice on Dan's part because that vague intellect made him more menacing."

Considering the avalanche of rubber and goo he was buried under, it's a testament to Trautman's theatrical physicality that such a revolting creature emits as much, if not more, onscreen personality than his still-living cast mates. The physical requirements of the role tested the actor.

"I spent a lot of time hanging around with that bloody head on," reflects Trautman. "It had to be glued down to the body, it had to look like all one piece. No one was sure when I'd be called down to the set and so I remember just lying around on a board for long periods of time just kind of waiting. And then right before we would roll they'd coat me with this goo that was thick and translucent to give it that slimy, wet, liquidy look."

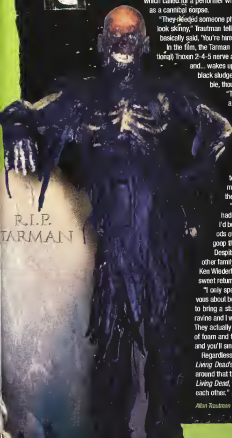
Despite the ordeal, Trautman, whose acting credits consist mainly of Jim Henson projects and other family-friendly fare, donned the Tarmen suit again for *Return of the Living Dead Part II* (1988). Ken Wiederhorn's far less successful follow-up. Arguably, the saving grace was Trautman's brief but sweet return as the messy zombie.

"I only spent one day on set for that one, so my memory is fuzzy but I do remember being nervous about being pushed into the water," recalls Trautman. "Wiederhorn told me that they were going to bring a stunt person in for this scene where I'm getting pushed by the kid off this ledge into a ravine and I was relieved. But as it turned out, the stunt guy was actually standing in for the little boy! They actually hired a stunt guy to push me into the water. Then they told me that the suit was made of foam and that one of two things will happen: you'll either float like a cork or it will absorb water and you'll sink like a stone. That was nice."

Regardless, Trautman believes the grotesque, flailing Tarmen truly embodies the first *Return of the Living Dead's* twisted and tricky ballet of giggles and gut-flipping terror. "Most of the horror films around that time were just gory and too serious and quite dull and unbelievable," he asserts. "But in *Living Dead*, the funnier it got, the more believable the horror became; the two elements reinforced each other."

*Allan Trautman hanging out on the set of the film.*

R.I.P.  
TARMAN



**45 GRAVE** singer **DINAH CANCER** explains how her band helped forge the link between mohawks and brain-munchers.

## PUNK ROCK REANIMATED

The soundtrack for *Return of the Living Dead* has earned as great a cult following as the film itself. Compiled and released by influential California alternative label Enigma, it was packed with the only kind of bands that would do the film right: morbid, black leather-loving punk acts. Alongside underground hits from The Cramps, The Damned and T.S.O.L., the most memorable song is undoubtedly "Party Time" by LA death rockers 45 Grave.

Oddly enough, the band's signature tune was originally not about beer-drinking, fast-driving punks at all, but an account of real-life horror. "Besides being an avid horror fan, I'm also into true crime magazines," explains singer Dinah Cancer. "About the time the guys in the band wrote the music to 'Party Time,' I read about a five-year-old girl in France in the late '60s who was murdered by her own family. So I wrote a song about the nightmare she went through. I was singing about the great birthday party I wished for her to have in the afterlife because her real life was such hell."

The producers of *RotD* loved the "do you want to party?" chorus, but asked the band to rewrite the other lyrics. In less than two weeks, 45 Grave came up with the film's thematic "Party Time (zombie version)."

Cancer recalls, "We were very much into movies centred around dark humour and we could see from the rough cut where they were going – a good old-fashioned 1950s teen horror like *I Was a Teen Werewolf*." So we tried to write something fun, like for a sci-fi trailer or something."

The singer, known as the Queen of Death Rock for her vampy appearance, acknowledges that the film was responsible for not only raising her band's profile considerably, but also acknowledging the popularity of horror in the punk community.

"It was nice to see more realistic punks in a movie," she says. "A lot of people were introduced to 45 Grave with *Return of the Living Dead* and I'm still very proud to be a part of it."

Dinah Cancer and a new line-up of 45 Grave are recording a new album, due out later this year. Keep up at [dinahcancer.net](http://dinahcancer.net).

Lisa Lipkowitz



Egge Hertz at Quasda Medical Supply; (left to right) Ben (Jo) Outages, Frank (James Kasser) and Freddy (Thom Matheson) come up with a plan

*Given the success of the movie, why weren't you involved with any of the sequels?*  
They asked me if I wanted to be involved with the sequel but I asked for too much money. I said, "I'm not going through that again on the cheap."

*To what extent are you involved with this new DVD reissue?*

None. It was a surprise, a shock, to me when I was informed they were putting out what they call a "director's edition." It runs something like twenty minutes more than the version I shot. The film I shot and edited was 88 minutes. I hear they're putting out a 117-minute version. Once this thing comes out, I'll take a look at it – they certainly haven't contacted me or sent anything over – and if they have tampered with it in a way that in my opinion hurts the film, then I will publicly abrogate it. This is some kind of nonsense; they're fiddling around and I don't even know where they're getting extra footage from, to tell you the truth... The only way I can see around this is if they tacked it on as extra scenes. That I could choke down.

*Obviously you're not going to make another Return movie, but do you have any interest in making something else in the same vein?*

"Dan O'Bannon's Zombies." If also would be a comedy; it would be much in the vein of *Return* and I would find every member of the *Return* cast who is still alive – because it was a wonderful cast – but I don't have a plot yet. But I'll tell you this: I have an image in my mind of a crowd of corpses limping their way down a wide street, coming from a Civil War cemetery, and on the soundtrack I'd play "Bonnie Blue Flag." [sings] *Hoo-ray for the bonnie blue flag - ba-bump ba-bump ba-bump*. Of course, at the other end of the street the police are all barricaded and these guys are coming down the street with a tattered Confederate flag. Of course, it is a social commentary of sorts, but mostly I just fell in love with that song and started thinking about how you would meld it with zombies.

*You've been slowed by illness for some time; have you been working on anything at all in the past few years?*

The only project I have close to finished now isn't a movie, it's a literary work. You wouldn't call it a novel, but your readers will understand immediately when I say, I've written *The Necronomicon*. All that's missing is the graphics, I've done three-quarters of the graphics. It's going to contain plates that are going to look like pages from *The Necronomicon*. ... I've been working on it for eight years, and I'd just finished the text late last year when I was interrupted by – well, I have Crone's Disease. It just drains your energy and you can't focus. Pain wipes out anything.

*We hope you're feeling better soon, and we're glad you're in such good spirits. Which leads us to one final question that all Return of the Living Dead fans are curious about: Dan, do you wanna party?*

[Laughs] I always party. ☺



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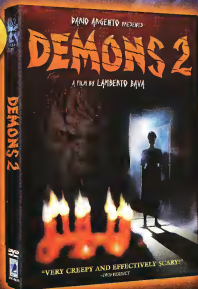
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HOME ENTERTAINMENT



*Dr. Stanley Burns, an expert on the esoteric art of taking portraits of the deceased, exposes the birth, life and afterlife of post-mortem photography.*



THE LOST ART OF  
**DEATH PHOTOGRAPHY**  
*by Last Chance Lance*





*Post-Mortem Portraits: Old Woman with Discharge From Nose (Tinsley, circa 1857) and (opposite) Child in Red Shirt on Windsor Reclining Chair (Saguenaytype, limited, circa 1858)*

For most, the idea of taking pictures at a funeral is outrageous, unethical and morbid. Death is an unavoidable part of life, though, and by as we might to hide it behind closed doors, wrap it in a veil of ritual and diffuse it with religion, it will affect each and every one of us. And our 21st century ideals are far removed from previous generations, who existed in a time when death played a much bigger part in day-to-day life.

In the early 19th century, a funeral was something that usually happened at home after one died in one's bed with family close by. Doctors still made house calls and would often stay with the family until the patient died. It was at this time that the art of post-mortem photography began to flourish. Grieving families would call upon the services of a memorial photographer to take pictures of the deceased, whose body would be on display in the front parlor (now called the living room) of the house until a sufficient mourning period had passed, then buried without a prolonged ceremony, fancy coffin or even a headstone.

"Death was common," says Dr. Stanley Burns, one of the world's leading experts on post-mortem photography and

"WE TRY TO PUSH  
DEATH OUT OF  
LIFE, WHEREAS IN  
THE 19TH CENTURY  
DEATH WAS PART OF  
EVERYDAY LIFE."

*Dr. Stanley Burns*



author of *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America*. "We lived with death, and when you look at the [subjects in the] pictures, you can see that many of them look very healthy, and that's because people died much more quickly. It's not like today if you have cancer where they can keep you alive for years after you should have died. People lived with death in the house. It wasn't until the turn of the century and the great advances in medicine that death was removed from everyday life."

The idea of capturing images of the dead in North America came from the immigrants of the 18th century who were aware of European mourning portraits, woodcuttings and death masks in churches or town halls — which featured saints, priests and various leaders lying on their deathbeds. Though unique, they were also very costly and time consuming, and there was a lack of artists available for the task. The invention of the camera and the relative affordability of still photography spelled the end of painted portraits of the dead, save for the most affluent.

"For the first time in the history of the world people could have a portrait gallery of their lives from their births to their deaths," explains Burns. "But if you died as photography was just invented, all you would have was a photograph of your death, and it was better to have that than nothing at all. It became such a tradition in society because this was the last thing that you could do with your loved one."

The first post-mortem photographs appeared in the 1840s and were known as daguerotypes — the result of a process which involved transferring a single photographed image onto a piece of highly polished silver. These were expensive, though, and were soon replaced with much cheaper glass or tin substitutes, popularly referred to as tintypes. The popularity of post-mortem portraits rose sharply, and would continue to rise, as even more affordable techniques were introduced.

From the daguerotypes came the carte-de-visite ("visiting card"), developed in the early 1860s, which placed the photograph on paper, making it affordable to just about anyone. Measuring 2 1/4" x 4", multiple prints could be made from it and it was an easier way to send a photo to distant relatives who couldn't attend the funeral. These were soon replaced by larger cabinet cards which measured 6 1/2" x 4 1/2" and were available with hymns or inspirational sayings printed on the back. The larger format and the fact that it could be easily mounted on a wall or take a prominent place on a mantel or cabinet (hence the name) made the cards extremely popular throughout the 1890s, with the last ones produced in the early 1920s.



*Painted Portrait of a Young Woman, 1840s. (Top) A young woman in a coffin, 1840s. (Bottom) A young woman in a coffin, 1840s. (Right) A young woman in a coffin, 1840s.*

In the early 20th century, novelty Stereographic pictures became popular. Images were viewed through a stereoscope, which made them appear in 3-D, and sometimes a crafty photographer — with the approval of the family — would also include a ghostly double exposure of a “angel” over a staged bereavement scene, creating the effect of the deceased’s spirit watching over their loved ones.

Once hired, the post-mortem photographer would arrive at the deceased’s house with all of the necessities for lighting, makeup and sometimes even a number of backdrops to choose from. In some cases he could even be called upon to paint open eyes over a dead child’s eyelids.

“You could have a baby’s eyes painted open on the photograph or set up a scene to have it appear as though the child was pulling a toy or what have you,” Burns explains. “This was done because quite often a child dies and there were no pictures of it alive, so the grieving parents wanted to have a picture that made it look as though it were alive, like it had been done with the posthumous mourning paintings that were around before photography was invented.”

Some of these pictures were so eerily life-like that the photographer incorporated special symbols into the photo, such as a flower with a broken stem, which would infer to the viewer that the subject’s life had been cut short.

Up to this point, the type of pictures produced focused on the face and body of the deceased, to make it appear as though they were alive or resting. This type of picture was slowly replaced, however, with scenes of the body inside the coffin (now being popularly referred to as a “casket”), ensconced with flower arrangements that at times were so abundant that it was difficult to spot the corpse. It eventually became rare to have a picture taken outside of the coffin, and the focus shifted to include the bereaved. The mourners’ grief was captured in staged scenes around the coffin or at the grave site.

With the funeral industry firmly established for decades, there was more pricey pomp injected into the average death ritual than ever. By 1890, the majority of funeral services moved out of the home altogether and the business of undertaking had become more common and hugely profitable. Families would now only have to sign over the body of a loved one and the undertakers would arrange for the embalming, flowers, photography, tombstone, hearse and grave site. The photographer was now relegated to a minor part of the funeral proceedings with the duties of decorating or posing the body removed completely.

“It just gradually ended,” says Burns. “When funeral directors got involved it became more commonplace to beautify the body and surround it with a canopy of flowers, and then they just closed the casket.”

The end of World War I saw portrait studios springing up in towns of all sizes and the price of cameras dropped drastically. People now had so many pictures of their loved ones while they were alive that it was no longer necessary to have shots taken after their deaths. Post-mortem pictures from the 1940s to present day are



“I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED  
TO PORTRAY THIS AS  
PART OF OUR CULTURE;  
IT WAS NOT A MORBID  
PHENOMENA.”

*Dr. Stanley Burns*



extremely rare and many funeral homes have banned photography altogether.

In terms of telling this history, there have only been a handful of books written on the subject, most notably Burns' out-of-print *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* (Twelve-Trees Press, 1980), which routinely sells for over \$400 USD at collector shows and online auctions. Searching through the mountains of photographs that Burns collected over the years to select the ones that would appear in the book was an arduous task that took nearly two decades to complete.

"I was looking for pictures that were unusual or telling, and had a powerful image," explains Burns. "It was done as much as an art book as it was to portray a facet of cultural history. ... I have always tried to portray this as part of our culture; it was not a morbid phenomena."

The book was followed by *Sleeping Beauty II: Grief, Bereavement and the Family in Memorial Photography – American and European Traditions* (Burns Archive Press, 2002), which features 144 photos from over fifteen different countries and examines mourning, grief and the family bonds that death creates from both North American and European perspectives.

Both releases have sparked the imaginations of history buffs and the morbidly curious, with Burns being the subject of many interviews and features for various publications, culminating with an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris in 2002. Some of Burns' photos were even featured in an integral scene in Alejandro Amenábar's supernatural film *The Others*.

"People love it or hate it," Burns responds when asked about the reaction to his books and photographs. "Most people don't understand it. In our culture there's no normal way of dealing with death except to put it aside. We try to push death out of life, whereas in the 19th century death was part of everyday life. People died much more quickly in the 19th century – you could lose all six of your children to an epidemic in two or three days."

Though a mainstream resurgence of its practice in funerary services is highly unlikely, there are a few cases of it being used as a therapeutic aid, such as with Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep ([nowilaymedowntosleep.org](http://nowilaymedowntosleep.org)), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping parents of deceased infants locate photographers in their area who are willing to compassionately photograph their dead children.

"There are so many photographers out there taking post-mortem pictures that it's become an art form, but no one is talking about it," reveals Burns. "One hundred years from now they might appear on the market, but for now people are holding them pretty close to their chests, as they are a very personal, private thing. What it comes down to is that everyone mourns differently; some people don't want any memorabilia and some people want a lot. But in the 19th century they all handled it the same way."

Cryptic or commonplace, the art of visually embalming the dead served, and continues to serve, a purpose in the mourning process. Its impact is best explained in the words of a bereaved mother, Flora A. Windeyer, in a letter written to the Rev. John Blomfield in November, 1870: "What a comfort it is to possess the image of those who are removed from our sight. We may raise an image of them in our minds but that has not the tangibility of one we can see with our bodily eyes." ❧



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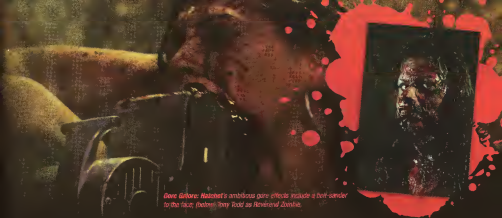
With unshakable determination, an undying love for '80s horror, **HATCHET** director **Adam Green** goes deep into the swamp on a mission to make slasher movies **fun** again.

# BLOODBATH ON THE BAYOU

by John W. Bowen

**H**ad Adam Green's film **Hatchet** premiered in the late 1990s, it may well have died a most ignominious delete-bin death, dismissed as yet another tired entry in the post-*Scream* slasher revival despite its general superiority to most

offerings in that played-out oeuvre. Landing in our midst barely a decade later, however, this affectionate and gore-soaked homage – laced with liberal doses of humour and nudity – has generated tremendous buzz on the festival circuit.



Gene Gore: *Hatchet*'s ambitious gore effects include a bolt-sunder to the face; (bottom) Tony Todd as Reverend Zombi.

"I really just made the movie that I wanted to see and I didn't pay any mind to what sells now or what everyone else is doing," the Massachusetts-born Green tells *Rue Morgue*. "By catering to myself, I sort of tapped into the vein of a legion of horror fans just like me."

Set primarily in the bayous outside New Orleans (*Hatchet* was the last feature shot in the area before Hurricane Katrina), the film details the nasty fate that befalls a group of tourists on a late-night boat tour that strays into the territory of legendary bayou-dwelling serial killer Victor Crowley.

"I had visited New Orleans for a friend's bachelor party," Green recalls, "and while I was there, I saw the info for one of the haunted swamp tours. The whole thing just sort of clicked into place at that point." While not completely virgin territory for a horror film, the bayou — like the Australian outback — is a seemingly ideal setting that has seldom been used.

"I think one of the main reasons that we haven't seen the bayou beaten to death yet is that it's not the sort of place where stupid teens are going to meddle. Cemeteries, cabins in the woods, haunted hospitals — [it's] easy to contrive a way to get your characters there. But who really goes into a bayou at night? Learning about New Orleans and their infamous nighttime haunted swamp tours was my ticket into that world. It also helped me to [incorporate] the characters I really wanted, a mixture of older folks and twentysomethings. I didn't want to make the basic teens-get-killed movie."

Although many of the principal players appear to be under 30, *Hatchet* has nary a teen in sight. And while the lead role of mopey, broken-hearted Ben wasn't specifically written for likeable, hand-dog comedic actor Joel David Moore, it suddenly seemed that way when he auditioned.

"The second he finished his audition, casting went into turmoil," recalls Green of the actor recognizable from roles in comedies such as

*Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story*, *Grandma's Boy* and *Art School Confidential*. "Many of the people involved at that point felt like the lead needed to be the usual chiselled-jaw leading man and they felt like Joel was too odd a choice. But the fact of the matter is that Joel was hands-down the very best actor that read for the part. He owned it. The character as written is a lovable, down-on-his-luck kind of guy."

Moore is joined in the film by a handful of familiar faces in the genre, including Mercedes McKittrick (Buffy the Vampire Slayer), Angela Leonard (*The Blair Witch Project*), Candyman's Tony Todd, in an unusually comedic turn, and even Robert Englund, who trades Freddy Krueger's blades for a scruffy beard and hunter's cap. The journeyman on the shoot, however, was Kane Hodder. Hodder, who has donned Jason Voorhees' goalie mask more than once, not only pulled duty here as stunt co-ordinator, but played Victor Crowley and Crowley's tortured father.

That *Hatchet*'s villain is hideously deformed is not surprising, but the actual models for effects guru (and *Friday* the 13th Part 7 director) John Carl Buechler's design are well off the beaten horror path.

"When I was explaining to John what I wanted Victor to look like, I used John Merrick [*The Elephant Man*] and Rocky Dennis [*Mask*] as my examples for the face, basically using Merrick's tumours and shape with Dennis' eye structure. The first time I saw Kane in the makeup it scared the shit out of me, but at the same time you almost wanted to cry for him when he started crying out 'Dasaddy!'"

Green's only previous feature, the Kevin Smith-esque *Coffee and Donuts*, was a micro-budget romantic comedy based on his real-life breakup with a previous girlfriend, but *Hatchet* had been percolating in his imagination since childhood ("I thought of the Victor Crowley character and mythology when I was just eight-

years-old," he maintains). Like fellow genre newcomers Eli Roth, Rob Zombie and Alexandre Aja, Green (who once fronted a metal band called Haddonfield) is a lifelong horror fan. He collected the action figures, went to every single genre film (regardless of quality), and always longed to put his own spin on the iconic films of his youth. Although his previous feature was a comedy, Green claims a true passion for horror, specifically homegrown. Instead of the usual marketing clichés, the film's tagline — "Old school American horror" — promises a movie made for horror fans by a horror fan.

"When I think of old school American horror," Green says, "I think of Hooper, Corman, Carpenter, Cunningham and Romero. I think of badass villains and gruesome death scenes. But most of all, I think of fun. When I walked out of their movies I was smiling from ear to ear. That was what I tried to capture again with *Hatchet*. It's got more jaw-dropping gore than any of today's fare offers, but its heart and soul are in the right place and you walk out exhilarated rather than disgusted. When I look back at the past decade and where we are at, the genre as a whole is just not giving me what I used to love about it. That's not to say there aren't a lot of new horror



# THE GENRE AS A WHOLE IS JUST NOT GIVING ME WHAT I USED TO LOVE ABOUT IT.

ADAM GREEN

firms that I love, but I have personally been missing the iconic monsters and fun ride that I used to get in the cinema."

Incidentally, Green had originally deployed another tagline — "It's not a remake, it's not a sequel, and it's not based on a Japanese one" — derived from an unusual source: a rejection letter from a major studio that balked at his pitch for *Hatchet*.

There are few filmmakers, however, more determined than Green, who achieved his goal of becoming a director through an even more unusual source of inspiration: Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider. After listening to the band obsessively, he wrote a report in the fourth grade about how Snider was the most influential person in his life.

"He didn't drink, do drugs or smoke; he was a good husband and father and he sang songs about fighting the system and standing up for yourself," he explains. "In his songs I learned that you can do whatever you want, no matter who you are or who is trying to keep you down."

Some years later, Green wrote to Snider, talking about how he wanted to be a filmmaker and how the musician had influenced him. To his surprise, Snider wrote back with an encouraging letter.

"He told me to do whatever it takes to get my first movie done and that he would one day 'see me at a bigwig Hollywood premiere,'" recalls Green. "So I began 'borrowing' equipment from my day job [in cable television]. Almost a decade went by and every time I got kicked in the nuts and was told 'no' by Hollywood, I would randomly bump into Dee in odd places and he would push me to keep going."

When *Hatchet* was eventually accepted into the Tribeca film festival, Green wrote to Snider to let him know, and to his shock Snider showed up to the premiere in a limo, with his entire family in tow, and even walked the rookie filmmaker

er down the red carpet. More recently, Snider showed his support by running the *Hatchet* panel at San Diego Comic-Con.

"It's one thing to have the drive and ambition but as most filmmakers will tell you, you also need a stroke of luck to actually make it in this town," asserts Green about Hollywood. "I never got handed that stroke of luck and I did everything the hardest way possible. But having my bona fide childhood hero egging me on and giving me words of wisdom to never give up was worth more than any stroke of luck could have provided. We've become close friends through it all and now he and I continue to support each other in our endeavours, whether it's giving each other notes on scripts, bouncing ideas off each other, or just seeking counsel in general."

Having made the transition from romantic comedy to balls-out horror, Green's follow-up film, which is already on the festival circuit, constitutes yet another sharp turn. He describes *Spiral* [see review p.36] as "an art house Hitchcockian psychodrama." Starring Moore again, it's a slower-paced character study of a severely ill, psychologically damaged office worker whose romantic obsessions suck him into a very dark vortex.

Green's upcoming project will see him covering very different ground in the genre as well — a horror-western. Called *Dead West*, it's based on the graphic novel of the same name by Rick Spears and Rob E. The project, which Green is developing with screenwriter

Jacob Foreman (*All the Boys Love Mandy Lane*), has Indians in the Old West coming back from the dead to seek revenge on their murderers.

"They ride horses, shoot bows and arrows, throw tomahawks," remarks Green. "It's all-out graphic war between them and the townsfolk. And that's just the first five minutes! It's much more serious in tone than *Hatchet*, though not a serious arsy drama or anything like *Spiral*. This is more [like Sergio Leone's] *Once Upon a Time in the West* if George Romero got to have a say in it."

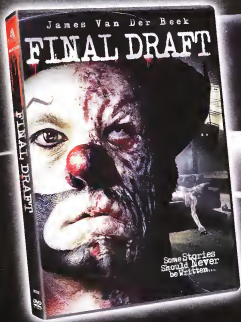
Green cites the project as being one more example of just how disinterested he is in genre trends and industry demands.

"Do you know how often I hear 'zombie movies are over'?" he sighs. "Yeah, right. That's like the people who say horror is dead because something underperformed at the box office one weekend. Horror will never die. Zombies, werewolves, slashers, vampires, demons, monsters — they fall in and out of fashion but a good movie is a good movie. People try and put everything in a box. I just hope I can keep breaking out of whatever box they put me in." ■

*Swamp Prey*: (left to right) Shawn Parry Short, Mely Mercedes McNelly and Jennie (Leigh Romanoff), and (above) Robert Englund.



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### 11 BELIEVED

Mc-Deew Chakitsakweirakul - Thailand

Based on a Thai comic book, *11 Believed* is a delicious blend of *Falling Down*, *The Game*, *Saw* and *Fear Factor* that explores the hilarious, disgusting and ultimately bloody lengths the average Joe can be pushed to if desperate enough. The Joe in question is Phuchit, an office worker who, after losing his job, car and dignity, gets a mysterious call that plunges him into a real-time game where he can get rich if he completes a series of tasks. Escalating from making children cry to violent civil disobedience to deadly acts of brutality, the sinister game turns its players into monsters. A delicate balance of humour, action, horror and tragedy, the film deservedly took first in Fantasia's Best Asian Film category. **BA**

### AL FINAL DEL ESPECTRO

Juan Felipe Orozco - Spain

A troubled woman moves into a remote apartment to decompress after a traumatic experience. Paranoid and afraid, she installs surveillance equipment all over the flat - equipment that confirms her suspicions that the place is haunted. This Spanish thriller's got J-horror like *Dark Water* written all over it and, as such, is already slated for an American remake. At the same time, it also turns in a few unique chills via paranoia, *Apocalypse*-like moments that elevate it beyond the average J-horror tedium. Worth seeing once for the atmosphere alone. **JV**

### ASS MONSTER

Bill Zebub - USA

If anyone's gonna hold a mirror to the insidiously inept, no-budget, straight-to-DVD-R, humor flick, notorious New Jersey schlockmeister Bill Zebub is the perfect candidate. Despite promising titles like *Jesus Christ Serial Rapist* (possibly the greatest title ever), Bill Zebub's ki-fi mishaps tend to be little more than software fodder designed to pry a few morsels of disposable income away from the fat, middle-aged hold guys who buy this sort of crap at humor conventions. But with this latest effort, Zebub has finally come clean, playing himself as a bumbling first-time director obsessively intent on creating his very own disasterpiece. Cleverly observed and hilariously self-referential. **SA**

### A BLOODY ARIA

Shin-yeon Won - Korea

The Fantasia crowd seemed split on this Korean take on giallo horror - really more of a bloody comic, bloody rural thriller - mainly because it has almost no one to root for. The closest thing to a protagonist here is an arrogant music professor who drives one of his students to a meatbank and nearly rapes her. She runs off, his Mercedes gets stuck, and a group of locals show up with a young man in a sack that they've been brutalizing. Soon, they turn their attention to the prof and much degradation and ass-kickings ensue. But it's not that simple, as the movie defies expectation at every turn, becoming a bizarre, twist-filled morality tale about bullying - and a convention-smashing minor masterpiece. **DA**

### BORDERLAND

Zav Ruman - Mexico/USA

This film has been celebrated for having been shot before *Roedel* and *Turistas* and for being based on a true story, but nevertheless it's about a bunch of pretty twenty-something American kids who go to Mexico, fall into the hands of a sadistic cult and proceed to get the ubiquitous torture, humiliation and kill treatment, etc. Seen Aslan (*Lord of the Rings*) turns in a surprisingly nasty performance as one of the assailants, but even Samwise Gamgee himself is helpless against the dark forces that threaten to bore the audience to death. **SA**

### DEATH NOTE

Shusuke Kashiwa - Japan

Based on the wildly popular manga series, *Death Note* is a teen comic book flick with dark undertones, featuring a particularly groovy cyberpunk version of Death. When the poorly animated demon drops his *Death Note* book - a journal with the power to kill anyone whose name is written within it - it's found by Light, a university student with a vigilantly streak. He uses his newfound godlike powers to anonymously strike down the world's worst criminals. With the police - led a mysterious detective "L" - investigating, Light turns his powers on anyone who stands in his way. Although a decent teen morality tale, it's too long and offers little for serious horror fans. **BA**

### THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

Gregory M. Wilson - USA

In this adaptation Jack Ketchum's powerhouse

novel, two teens are sent to live with their Aunt Ruth after their parents' deaths, only to be tortured (literally) by the neighbourhood children at their increasingly deranged aunt's behest. Blanche Baker carries the picture as Ruth, a character who'll enrage and disgust viewers, and the horrific abuse endured by the girls (particularly Meg) is equally shocking onscreen. The adaptation loses some of its emotional punch, though, as now it's told primarily in third person, rather than from the point-of-view of one of the young conspirators (which cast the readers as virtual co-conspirators). Still, it's better than 90 percent of horror novel adaptations. **BB**

## HELL'S GROUND

**Omar Khan – Pakistan**

Pakistan's first gore film – shot by American film school graduate Omar Khan – makes up for lost time by trying to be every horror film at once. A TCM-style van full of slasher movie clichés (the stoner, the nerd, the good girl, etc.) en route to a rock concert is diverted by protesters rallying against a mysterious disease (caused by polluted water). Heading into a forbidding forest, the travellers pick up a hitchhiking witch doctor, encounter flesh-eating zombies and fall prey to a burka-wearing slasher with a spiked ball and some serious mother issues. The gore would make Fido proud and although it's derivative, the extremely low-budget film keeps things fresh by combining the horror homages with Pakistani culture. **BB**

## HOME SICK

**Adam Wingard – USA**

Home's a lesson young filmmakers need to learn: casting genre mainstay Bill Moseley and even Tom Towles (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*) won't save a bad script. A psychotic man (Moseley) bearing a suitcase full of rats arrives at the home of some disenfranchised youths and holds them hostage while slicing himself up. When their friends start turning up dead, they suspect Mr. Suitcase and, rather than calling the police, go on the hunt for him. Of course, it isn't the race-fetish guy who's slaughtering them. The best thing this movie has going for it is nicely achieved gore, but the rest is a horrible mess we can hardly recommend to anyone outside of the Gore-met. **BB**

## KME 31

**Rigoberto Castañeda – Mexico**

A ghostly child causes a horrific traffic accident on Kilometer 31 – shown twice in all its gory glory – that leaves its victim in a coma, both legs amputated, and her identical twin sister plagued by psychic messages begging her for help. The imagery is frequently stunning, and taken on a scene-by-scene basis it's hard to find fault, but an unfortunate twenty-minute chop forced on the Mexican producers by their Spanish distributor gutted out all of the characters and at times seems to have put pieces back together out of order, resulting in a frustrating mess. **CB**



Can't look at Horror Highlights: KME 31 (above top left), Pakistan's Hell's Ground, The Gift from Now and elsewhere (see Stephen's guide: Mulberry Street).

## MULBERRY STREET

**Jim Mickle – USA**

"Rot people" – you hear that and think B-grade monster movie, but *Mulberry Street* is anything but campy. In fact, it's got more in common with *Night of the Living Dead* than science-gone-bad creature features. Shot in NYC for peanuts, it's one of the most inventive, intense and intelligent American horror movies of late. When a mysterious plague breaks out that turns people into ravenous rat-folk, the tenants of a soon-to-be-demolished apartment building – led by an ex-boxer co-writer Nick Damici – band together to survive the night as the Big Apple erupts in bloody chaos. Without a doubt, the horror highlights of Fantasia. **BB**

## MURDER PARTY

**Jeremy Saulnier – USA**

After finding an invite in the street, a bumbling schlub dresses up in a cardboard costume and travels to a mysterious Halloween shindig, only to find himself the unfortunate guest of honour at a murder party thrown by a group of sociopathic wannabe Andy Warhols intent on creating homicidal installations pieces with his sorry ass. As their hard drugs, power tools and insecurities come out, carnage ensues. With equal measures of absurdity, inventiveness, scathing social satire and some genuinely pulse-pounding splatterific set pieces, *Murder Party* is exactly the sort of ultra-violence we travel to Fantasia each year longing to see. **SB**



left from a weirdo real estate broker who, unbeknownst to them, lives on the grounds with his manic boss. Turns out the guys use the remote industrial space to trap and torture couples, but these aren't your average lowlards. In fact, they're more sadistic than the "bad guys." Packed with amusing (yes, amusing) torture scenes and trashy sex, the ultra low-budget debut feature from new-comer Peter Koller doesn't take itself too seriously (which might be its only downfall) but nevertheless makes inventive use of the tired survivalist sub-genre. **BB**

## PERFECT CREATURE

**Glean Standring – New Zealand**

In the misapplied tradition of *Nightwatch*, *Perfect Creature* tries way too hard to be everything and instead becomes a derivative genre mishmash. Part horror flick, part sci-fi epic and part cop thriller, it's set in a retro futuristic New Zealand where vampires and humans have co-existed peacefully for generations, and one of the bloodsuckers starts killing and threatens to unleash a biological disaster. A priestly vampire teams up with a human cop to stop him (his own brother – how poetic!) in this hopelessly convoluted yam. At least the highly original world it's set in holds back the boredom... for a while. **BB**

## THE RAGE

**Robert Kutzman – USA**

There's something to be said about working within your budget when you don't really have one. *The Rage* is the perfect example of a movie that could have played out much better had it not been so ambitious. This goofy gore comedy stars none other than the Weintraub himself, Andrew Dyball, as a mad scientist who unleashes a zombie plague on

## ON EVIL GROUNDS

**Peter Koller – Austria**

A psychotic couple (named Romeo and Juliet) happily engaged in an abusive relationship purchase a

This year's collection of short films in the Small Ganga Truema programme was so strong, we had to highlight all the entries.

## SHORT CUTS

### HYPERACTIVE INGREDIENTS

**Trevor Pinchum/USA**

Trevor Pinchum's animated poisoned-pigs-themed short is perhaps the grossest and cutest thing you'll see this year.

### TOILET LADY: A RAPE STORY

**Alberto Vignatone/Italy**

This Italian gore-fest puts a refreshing spin on the rape/revenge genre. Bring some bathroom tissue to clean your seat.

### NUMBER 7

**Ryan Sage/USA**

A cocked-out hooker and her frecky pimp try to fleece an indecisive John in a neck brace – with shocking, then amusing results.

### DEADLY TANTRUM

**Mika Mott/UK**

Essentially the finale of an umpteenth '80s slasher flick, this Moodsworld short stars a bumbling masked killer who'll have you in hysterics.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY 2 YOU

**David Alcázar/Spain**

An effectively chilling tale centred around the child welfare profession – with a gruesome torture twist.

### VIOLETA

**Marc Ribá and Anna Solanas/Spain**

A Spanish stop-motion piece with all the strange eeriness of Robert Morgan and the cuteness of Tim Burton. Excellent.

### PROTOCOLE 33

**Benoît Lestang/France**

An erotic acid trip of a film that recalls the body horror of Cronenberg. A real skincrawler.

### GARY'S TOUCH

**Ken Tokunashi/Canada**

A truly disgusting look at one director's extreme desperation to carry on his DMA. Nauseating yet impossible to dismiss. Few films are harder to sit through.

### THE DEMONOLOGY OF DESIRE

**Rodrigo Gudiño/Canada**

Festival-goers were both offended and intrigued by Gudiño's acclaimed tale of a young girl who has extremely perverse idea of love. You will be too.

**Johnna Veckovic**

*The Demonology of Desire*



*The Wizard of Gore (bottom) starring in a 1960s 'horror' film; 'The Demonology of Desire' (top) is a 2007 Canadian short film*

some unsuspecting campers via CGI zombie-vultures. Sometimes hysterical for all the wrong reasons (CGI zombie-vultures), sometimes for the right reasons (zombie midgests), *The Rage* is a good time if you keep your cinematic expectations low and your lust for a sicko bloody party high. **EA**

### THE SIGNAL

**David Bruckner, Don Bush and Jacob Genry/USA**

Along with *End of the Line*, *Mulberry Street* and *Right at Your Door* (see review p.42) this was part of Fantasia's Urban Apocalypse programme – but with a twist: it was written and directed in sections by three filmmakers. The premise has a mysterious signal pumped through TVs, phones, radios, etc. that causes anyone exposed to it for too long to go on a killing spree. The first act is a harrowing trip through hell as a woman must escape her murderous husband, then her apartment building-cum-slaughterhouse. The second act radically changes to a horror-comedy, yet still works, as said husband searches for his wife. Too bad their third act reunion begins with confusing twists and momentum-killing talking heads. Worth watching despite this. **EA**

### SPIRAL

**Adam Green – USA**

Horror director Adam Green goes in a completely different direction with his arty Hitchcockian thriller about a severely introverted painter who meets an equally weird girl at his baying job. She shows an unusual amount of interest in him and his talent and finds herself in his portrait chair, only to discover she isn't the only one he's painted – in precisely the same poses. Though the ending is somewhat pre-

dictable, performances from co-director (and star of *Hatchet* – also at Fantasia) Joel Moore and Amber Tamblyn (*The Ring*, *The Grudge 2*) keep things going strong in this rainy, Portland, Oregon-set character study. **JY**

### THE UNSEEABLE

**Wisl Szeszenberg – Thailand**

We're haunted by ghosts, both living and dead, and this 1930s-set Thai film is out to prove it. A new mother sets out to find her wayward husband and lands at the boarding house of a wealthy shut-in spinster, who seemingly studied beneath Cinderella's cruel stepmother, and a creepy grandma who may or may not eat baby intestines. *The Unseeable* borrows heavily from *The Sixth Sense* but is nonetheless a jump-scare-filled spookshow that's more fun than it is scary. **MG**

### WIZARD OF GORE

**Jeremy Kasten – USA**

Amazing 40 years after the fact, a remake of H.G. Lewis' whacked-out head-scratcher appears, featuring far less graphic violence than the original. Jeremy Kasten's flaccid 'revitalisation' sees Crispin Glover in the role of Moribund the Magnificent, a crackpot carnival magician who specialises in plucking molested nymphs out of the audience to creatively exorcise onsets. It's all an 'illusion,' of course, but when the women actually start showing up dead from the very wounds depicted in the show, suspicious glances are predictably thrown in the magician's direction. Glover is shamefully wasted in this awkwardly stylised act of redundancy that, despite featuring wall-to-wall topless chicks, fails to raise the pulse beyond a mere pit-ter-patter. **SA**



# She is Starved for You

Sean Patrick FLANERY Charlotte AYANNA Michael BIEHN

## THE INSATIABLE

Once You've Tasted The Afterlife,  
There's No Turning Back

Harry Bulko (Sean Patrick Flanery), a shy salesman, is on his way home one night when he witnesses Tatiana, a female vampire (Charlotte Ayanna) viciously rip the head off her victim. When no one believes his story, Harry decides to build a large cage in his cellar to trap the bloodthirsty killer. Using himself as bait, Harry tricks Tatiana into the cage and imprisons her. But with no source of fresh blood, the strikingly beautiful vampire faces sure death. Not wanting to kill such a remarkable creature, but unable to release a ravenous vampire onto the city streets, Harry is faced with an impossible choice - give in to her seductive powers or save innocent lives from a gruesome fate.

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IN **BIO SHOCK**, A GAME SET IN A DECAYING CITY IN THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN, PLAYERS COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH MUTATED HUMANS AND THE LEGACY OF SCIENCE GONE UEAU, UEAU BRO.

# TRAPPED IN A Paradise Lost

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

In the years following World War II, Andrew Ryan became increasingly disillusioned with the emerging government superpowers. He dreamed of a place where science could advance without the fear of government interference, so he built Rapture, a lavish underwater city to facilitate such study. It was a utopia—at least until it all went horribly wrong. And that's where you, the player, come in, a plane crash castaway in one of the most anticipated games of the year for the PC and Xbox 360, *BioShock*.

"Rapture is a paradise lost," says lead designer Paul Helquist of Irrational Games' first-person shooter (distributed by 2K Games). "[I]f it isn't your standard concrete-and-pipe complex that you see so often in games these days. There are theatres, underwater forests, amazing art deco-inspired skyscrapers and fantastic ocean vistas. Unfortunately, Rapture is no longer the clean and pristine place it once was. Slowly being reclaimed by the ocean and ravaged by combat, many parts of it are leaking, damaged, and worn."

At *BioShock*'s onset, players are deposited into this atmospheric environment—a virtual underwater ghost town populated by once-human, now vicious, mutations. There, they'll wander the darkened hallways, forced to face all manner of atrocities committed by the citizens of the city. They'll meet psychotic and often homicidal characters who have lost their humanity on more than one level. And if that's still not enough to send chills up the spine, the suspense in *BioShock* is further amped up by the special attention given to the game's sound design, in particular the fact that players are able to hear enemies long before they can be seen, yet not determine their actual

locale, making for a seriously tension-racked experience.

The gameplay itself will undoubtedly spark a sense of déjà vu for fans of 1999's RPG/first-person shooter hybrid *System Shock 2* (considered by many to be a horror classic). This shouldn't come as a surprise considering that both titles were helmed by virtually the same development team (although for different companies) and utilize similar game mechanics. Apart from the radically different storyline and the obvious advances in gaming technology over the last eight years, *BioShock* also diverges from *System Shock 2* in that it caters more exclusively to fans of the modern first-person shooter through a marked reduction of the RPG elements and an overall upping of the ante in terms of what players can do within the game environment. New additions to play include the ability to hack medical machines to poison foes, modify a variety of lethal weapons and upgrade one's character.

The ultimate goal of the game is to survive Ryan's attempts to eradicate you, while fighting the wrongs done at Rapture—or not. *BioShock* has a built-in "morality" element, meaning, quite simply, that decisions you make during the game will shape your gameplay experience. In the case of *BioShock*, these moral choices primarily revolve around obtaining "ADAM," a genetic enhancement substance that grants players (and their enemies) various special powers.

"ADAM is a substance that the scientists of Rapture discovered in a sea slug at the bottom of the ocean," elaborates Helquist. "It has the amazing property of allowing people to rewrite their genetic code with snippets of DNA from other organisms or DNA strands specifically developed to enhance your natural abilities. In the



**BioShock:** Players face off against a Big Daddy to gain ADAM, which grants players supernatural powers such as Electro-bolt (above) and Telekinesis.

game, ADAM is the most important resource and allows gamers to customize their experience by choosing new plasmids (active powers) and gene tonics (passive abilities) to give them unique abilities with which to tackle the game's enemies and challenges.

ADAM grants players powers such as Telekinesis, which can be used to not only grab out-of-reach objects but also hurt flaming corpses, and Electro-bolt, the ability to shoot lightning bolts out of one's hands -- a particularly useful trait for electrocuting pulsats of enemies standing in water. However, in order to obtain these lethal enhancements, you'll have to kill some Big Daddies (essentially "bosses").

"The keepers of the ADAM are the Little Sisters," says Hellquist of the little girls who are always found near the Big Daddies. "They are the orphans of Rapture and are protected by the Big Daddies. The Big Daddies are the genetically engineered bodyguards of the Little Sisters. They are trapped in massive armored diving suits and pack a major punch. The player needs to defeat the Big Daddies before they can access the ADAM of the Little Sisters. Once the Big Daddy is dead the cowering and crying sister is at your mercy. Will you have mercy on her or add to the nightmare of Rapture?"

Big Daddies and Little Sisters are far from the only mutations that players will face while at Rapture, however. To finish the game, they will also have to ward off what Hellquist calls a "never-ending onslaught of the genetic junkies called Splicers." Splicers are Rapture's former residents who've attempted to use genetic enhancement to their advantage. And while this gene tinkering did grant them powers (which they don't hesitate to use against you during

combat), it also turned them into fast-moving, zombie-like creatures reminiscent of the foes faced in the *Resident Evil* franchise.

Luckily, players have all sorts of tools and weapons -- both expected and unexpected -- at their disposal to fight back. These include around twenty plasmids, 50 gene tonics and more than fifteen types of ammunition. They will be able to, among other methods, shoot, burn, blow up or even shatter their enemies to itty bitty pieces.

"We have many explosive objects in the game that can be an incredible asset or an incredible danger," reveals Hellquist. "One of the most effective ways to hurt someone is to throw an explosive at them with Telekinesis. Unfortunately, while you are lining up your shot, enemies might shoot the barrel, blowing it up in your face! We also have some items that when you pick them up they give you a benefit, but have a downside. For example, drinking liquid in the game gives you a small health benefit, but costs you some of your EVE, which powers your plasmids. If you drink too much you can even get drunk which affects your vision and makes it harder to aim."

Obviously, it's this sort of special attention to detail and that gets gamers talking. So it's no surprise that *BioShock* emerged from this year's E3 gaming conference with a hearty amount of buzz, despite 2K keeping a tight lid on much of the title's best bits, including the honors that await its players.

With horror video games more popular than ever and each more complex than the last, what is the secret to their ongoing success?

Hellquist thinks he knows. "The key to creating a successful horror [title] is man-

aging the gamers' expectations. As designers we are constantly trying to create situations where players think one thing is going to happen and then surprising them with something else. Pacing is also extremely important. You have to have anticipation and build up to get the best results from horrific imagery or events. Without it you are left with simple 'boo' moments, which are good to have, but you need to keep [them] to a minimum."

For more information on *BioShock*, visit [2kgames.com/bioshock](http://2kgames.com/bioshock).



Hot on the heels of two successful novels and the hit show they spawned, author **JEFF LINDSAY** is back with the third book in his serial killer series: *Dexter in the Dark*.

# MILD-MANNERED MURDERER

by Monica S. Kuebler

**M**et Dexter Morgan: Miami, Florida resident, forensic blood spatter expert and serial killer, but that's not what's most surprising about the character who's spawned the best-selling novels *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (2004) and *Dearly Devoted Dexter* (2005) and an equally popular cable TV series. What sets Dexter apart from most fictional murderers is that, despite being a cold-blooded killer who has difficulty relating to anything "normal" and "human," he's downright endearing. The third novel in the series, *Dexter in the Dark*, will hit stores on September 18, shortly before the start of season two of *Dexter* on Showtime on September 30.

The man behind it all is author Jeff Lindsay, who turned one of society's most feared and despised criminal archetypes into a character worth rooting for. Even Lindsay himself didn't predict *Dexter*'s popularity.

"I thought it would be a one-shot thing, you know, middle binger in the air and then I'd fade off into the sunset," he says of the concept, which landed him a multi-book deal from Doubleday. "I've always preferred serial fiction. I just figured that this one wasn't going to be serialized."

Perhaps what's more shocking, especially given the gory killings in the books, is that Lindsay doesn't harbor a fascination for things dark and violent.

"I would never say that I really had [an interest in the macabre]," he confesses. "I read a lot of the darker stories—when I was a kid I was always a fantasy and sci-fi fan. I don't

read any of the current stuff and when people started saying, 'Gosh, *Dexter* is so different from the genre,' I didn't even know there was a genre!"

So where did *Dexter* come from? If you believe Lindsay, who has a degree in creative writing and two Masters in theatre, it was born from a random thought ("[maybe] serial killing isn't always a bad thing") that came to him while attending a business luncheon. By the time he got home he had most of the plot outlined on napkins. From there, he began his research.

"I have a relative who is a psychologist who has done some criminal consulting work for the state of California and I talked to her at great length," Lindsay explains. "[I] also did the usual stuff: reading books, checking the internet, all of that. I came up with sort of an archetype, a thing that a profiler would recognize as being a standard model serial killer, then I started toying around with it to make it fun."

The character that emerged was both typical and atypical. *Dexter* comes complete with early childhood trauma which awakened his "Dark Passenger" (a term Lindsay uses for the presence within the character that supplies his murderous urges). However, since he was adopted by a cop who saw his unnatural leanings early on, his path was rerouted. *Dexter*'s adoptive father taught him to act normal, all while training him to kill only society's worst predators without getting caught. Now grown-up, *Dexter* sticks to these lessons, and by the latest book, he's even taken normalcy to the next level—with a pending wedding and two soon-to-be stepchildren with violent pasts of their own.

But that's not the only challenge faced by *Dexter* in *Dexter in the Dark*. There's also a case which sends his Dark Passenger into hiding and forces him to rely on his human instincts alone—a simple but effective device that allowed Lindsay to further explore the serial killer's mind.

"There are a lot of damaged individuals out there who have that inner voice, whatever they want to call it," he says. "I was just wondering, 'Is it schizophrenia? Is it possession? Is it just another way to distance yourself from what you're doing?' ... The more I did research on it, the more I realized that it goes all the way back. Every culture that I know of, that I can find records on, has had some form of this, had some way to describe it. So it seemed to me, that to take it all the way back to something biblical would make it more real, because that's where it's from."

Through this use of actual mythology, Lindsay brings an unexpected supernatural element to the tale, which heightens the stakes in the murder investigation and draws readers deeper into *Dexter*'s head. It's this clever exploration, among other narrative tricks, that helps the story endure—important since Lindsay promises he's not done with the character any time soon. In forthcoming editions, readers can expect international locales and a situation where *Dexter* kills the wrong person.

As far as what Lindsay thinks of the television adaptation, of which Season One just hit DVD, he loves it: "I sat there and I watch as one of the biggest fans of the show. I think they're doing a terrific job."





**MASTERS OF HORROR** *the* **WASHINGTONIANS**



## JOHNATHAN SCHAUCH AND SAUL RUBINER

**FROM PETER MEDAK**  
DIRECTOR OF THE CHANGING  
OF THE SPECIES II

FROM **PETER MEDAK**  
DIRECTOR OF THE CHANGELING  
SPECIES II

TELEPLAY BY **RICHARD CHIZMAR AND JOHNATHON SCHAECH**  
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**FEAST ON THIS 9/18/07**

**PETER MEDAK**

**STARRING**

**JOHNATHON SCHAECH** (THAT THING YOU DO!)  
**SAUL RUBINEK** (FRASIER, CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM)

What if everything we believe about our sacred icons of American history turned out to be a complete lie? Johnathon Schaech and Saul Rubinek star in this gruesome tale about the discovery of a Revolutionary War artifact that proves George Washington's famed wooden teeth hungered for more than just liberty. How far will a group of homicidal historians go to keep a hero's grisly legacy alive? Would our government deliberately hide the truth to cover-up the most of the matter?



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*Right at Your Door:* Lexi (Mary McCormack) is trapped outside during a biohazardous attack.

## SUBURBAN APOCALYPSE

### RIGHT AT YOUR DOOR

Starring Rory Cochrane, Mary McCormack and Tony Perez  
Written and directed by Chris Gorak  
Lionsgate

Disaster movies are the kissing cousin of the horror film: spectacles of death and destruction without real gore or the supernatural. In the '70s they concerned fluke catastrophes localized to skyscrapers, cruise ships or airplanes. In the past decade they became more spectacular special effects vehicles, showcasing CGI meteors, massive volcanic eruptions, a flash ice age and even the Earth's damaged core. With mega-effects, large casts and huge budgets, they're sensational, mass-marketed action-thrillers.

It's when disaster movies strive for realism, though, such as the nuclear Armageddon fests *The Day After* or *Threads*—which soared to the craft of TV viewers in the '80s

—that they become truly terrifying. And the very realistic and contemporary *Right at Your Door* is as terrifying as it gets.

Rory Cochrane plays Brad, a musician who's just moved to the 'burbs with his wife Lexi (Mary McCormack). Shortly after he sees her off to work, a series of biohazardous "dirty" bombs explode throughout the city, causing mass casualties and widespread panic. Frantically trying to find his wife, Brad soon realizes there's no way out of the city, so he hits the hardware store for supplies and seals himself inside his house, along with the neighbour's handyman Alvaro (Tony Perez), who begs for shelter. As Brad frantically awaits Lexi's return, men in HAZMAT suits start mounding up

people in the streets, forcing Brad to make a series of painful decisions.

Like the sinister white ash that settles on the landscape, a sickly tension blankets this film. Death is in the air and Brad is faced with the kind of choices that constantly ratchet up the paranoid factor. Shot on video, with minimal cast members and effects, *Right at Your Door* places the viewer in the centre of Brad's nightmare and offers just enough glimpses of the outside world to suggest doomsday on a bad day's budget.

Before embarking on this first feature, director Chris Gorak was art director on an impressive list of films, including *Tombstone*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Fight Club* and *The Man Who Wasn't There*. Here, he shows a lot of shoestring creativity in a movie that'll scare you more than any torture dungeon gore show at the multiplex.

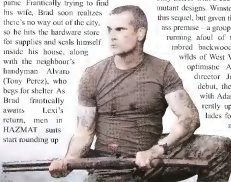
Dave Alexander

## BACKWOODS BUFFOONERY

### WRONG TURN 2: DEAD END

Starring Erica Leerhsen, Henry Rollins and Texas Battle  
Directed by Joe Lynch  
Written by Tim Meyer and Al Septien  
20th Century Fox

When acclaimed effects jockey Stan Winston produced 2003's *Wrong Turn*, he clearly had no ambition to reinvent the horror movie as we knew it, but he served up an infectious, energetic and gory poem to hill-billy horror with a cool cast and astounding mutant designs. Winston wasn't involved in this sequel, but given the delightfully dumb-as-premise—a group of twentysomethings running afoul of toxic waste-mutated, mired backwoods cannibals in the wilds of West Virginia—I remained optimistic. And although it was director Joe Lynch's feature debut, the fact that he's buds with Adam Green, who's currently up to his ass in accolades for *Hatchet* (see p.36), made it seem promising.



Henry Rollins as  
Wrong Turn 2

Well, so much for good omeets. Lynch's grasp of horror cinema grammar is impressive and the cast is capable, but in true slasher film fashion, the good ingredients are squandered on a mouth-breather script. In a bid for relevance (or something) *Wrong Turn 2*'s writers have made their roster of cannibal fodder the cast and crew of an underpopulated *Survivor*-style reality show (there's only about a half-dozen contestants), with punk rock pioneer Henry Rollins in full muscle-bound bluster as the program's ex-analyt host. Add backwoods mutants and characters from Slasher Film Central Casting (jock, slut, obnoxious peepie, sullen goth chick), stir and serve lukewarm with side of obviously rubber entrails.

Genre nudges and winks naturally abound here, so get your Horror Movie Reference Scoopcards out, kids: one character wears a *Battle Royale* T-shirt, there's a lengthy and rather uninspired homage to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*'s infamous dinner scene and various thinly disguised nods to *Predator*, *The Hills Have Eyes* and — I swear — *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. In other self-reflexive news, *American Idol* also-lost Kimberly Caldwell plays herself as the film's first victim, and hey, who among us has never fantasized about coming in *Idol* contestant out in the stacks and cleaving them in twain — vertically — with a single axe blow? Yeah, you know you have.

John W. Bowen

## GRADE-A SLICK CHEESE

### I KNOW WHO KILLED ME

Starring Lindsay Lohan, Neal McDonough and Julia Ormond  
Directed by Chris Sivertson  
Written by Jeff Hammond  
Sissy

Human train wreck Lindsay Lohan's pervasively pleasurable new thriller *I Know Who Killed Me* is the sort of "how the fuck did that get released?" mainstream movie enigma that truly draws the line in the sand: you're either gonna eat this sublime gobbler up or reject it outright. Thus critique happens to love turkey, however, and with all the life-mimicking-art-imitating-career suicide cult flick kookiness going on here, this may be the best big-budget bad movie since Paul Verhoeven's justly maligned (but eccentrically brilliant) titty bar belly flop *Showgirls*.

Lohan dragged her ass out of rehab last year for the role of Aubrey Fleming, a hot shit porno protégé who goes missing and re-emerges as a handless, legless stripper named Dakota — a twist that causes great confusion amongst those who know her



*I Know Who Killed Me:* Lindsay Lohan, as stripper Aubrey Fleming, is reborn as a B-movie star

Seems Dakota/Aubrey survived the near fatal hacking of a local serial killer and now swears she isn't the girl that her mom (Julia Ormond) thinks she is and may actually be Fleming's long-lost twin sister. Head spinning yet? That's only the set-up for this disorienting, overheated, sleazy pulp which will have you convulsing in ironic disbelief while being hypnotized by its brazen weirdness.

Director Chris Sivertson was responsible for last year's nasty little B-thriller *The Last* and he brings the same level of kinetic nihilism, graphic violence and slick atmospherics to *I Know Who Killed Me*, goosing the action with some of the best use of red/blue giallo gels since Bava's *Blood and Black Lace*. But he's ultimately betrayed by Jeffrey Hammond's inept dialogue and patently ludicrous plot that puts the overacting Lohan in all manner of compromising and misad situations. When the endlessly self-destructive star coils around her stripper pole, heavy lidded eyes crying out for help, the picture truly reaches its apex as we, the stunned audience, witness the death of a once-promising and sweet Hollywood starlet... and the birth of a new exploitation idol. Grade-A slick cheese of the highest order.

Chris Alexander

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF TORTURE PORN

### CAPTIVITY

Starring Elisha Cuthbert, Daniel Gillies and Pruitt Taylor Vince  
Directed by Roland Joffe  
Written by Larry Cohen and Joseph Tura  
Lionsgate

The graphic billboard campaign and the ensuing protests from feminist and family

values groups that forced Lionsgate to cancel the ads hinted that *Captivity* might take torture porn to a new high — or low, depending on your taste for the victim-in-a-booby-trapped-maze concept. And given that *Captivity* is directed by Roland Joffe (*The Killing Fields*) and co-written by subversive horror veteran Larry Cohen (*It's Alive*), genre fans can be forgiven for thinking they'd be in for a challenging, thoughtful trip to the torturer's dungeon. In the end, *Captivity* neither shocks nor challenges, but proves that, when it comes to horror, Hollywood will rubber-stamp any project that promises to cash in on last year's youth-oriented hit.

Lifting the post-industrial hell look of the *Saw* franchise, the film asks us to believe that a shuffling, creepy fat guy could drag supermodel Jennifer (Elisha Cuthbert of *24*) at a New York City VIP fundraiser and drag her back to his house, which sits on a warehouse-sized high-tech torture dungeon. After she wakes up in a cell stocked with her own designer clothing and decorated with her modelling pictures, Jennifer's forced into a maze of torture scenarios designed to teach a lesson about the price of beauty — or whatever. All that torture, degradation and lack of bathing facilities doesn't stop her from looking like a primed hottie, something not lost on Gary (Daniel Gillies), the male hottie locked up in the cell next door. Jennifer may have been forced to watch snuff films and eat blended-up body parts, but that doesn't stop her from giving Gary the shagging of his life. Joffe tries to freshen up this overstocked tank of clichés and bad herrings with pseudo-sociological commentary on the beauty industry and some poignant back story about the stalker, who, like every psycho killer, is ailing out his aggression against an abusive mother (we know this because some of



## ANGUISH AMPLIFIED

### SOUNDS LIKE

Starring Chris Bauer, Laura Margois and Nicholas Elia  
Directed by Brad Anderson  
Written by Brad Anderson and Mike O'Driscoll  
Anchor Bay



Director Brad Anderson (*The Machinist*, *Seaview 9*) has proven himself a minor master at creating unrelenting dread within the bleak interiors of modern buildings and the machines that keep them humming—a tradition he continues with his first contribution to *MoH* "Sounds Like." The story of Larry Pearce, a middle manager who monitors the tech-support drones at a software firm, it's one of the series' most understated yet tense and horrifying entries.

Veteran TV actor Chris Bauer plays Larry, a slightly menacing boy trapped in a man's body who hasn't been the same since his young son died of a heart condition a year or so earlier. The shock and grief have turned his wife into a dream-interpreting New Age sponge brain, while Larry suffers from increasingly overpowering episodes of hyper-acute hearing. Adapting Mike O'Driscoll's short story, Anderson uses those episodes to full effect, transforming Larry's shrinking emotional world into a horrifying soundscape in which the clicking of knitting needles becomes a Dolby-enhanced session of Jack Sparrow-esque swordplay, and a trip to a local restaurant results in mere cacophony than a Serengeti watering hole at feeding time. The lengths that Larry eventually goes to finally get some peace and quiet create a climax of surreal, gruesome imagery that would have done *Alejandro Jodorowsky* proud.

The pacing occasionally falters in the middle, as if Anderson is not quite comfortable with the one-hour format, but Bauer's amazing turn as a *Yes Man* driven to insanity keeps the viewer engrossed in the story's slow turn toward its claustrophobic finale. With plenty of droll comic touches aimed at ruthless corporate politics and suburban blandness, you'll be rooting for poor buttoned-down Larry by the end. Just don't clap too loud.

James Grainger



*Skinwalkers*: The werewolves are bad... because they're bikers.

cinematic POV and reaction shots). Well, at least *Captivity* is helping usher in the end of bad torture porn flicks sooner than later, and that's worth something.

James Grainger

## WEREWOLVES ON WONKY WHEELS

### SKINWALKERS

Starring Jason Behr, Elias Koteas and Matthew Knight  
Directed by James Isaac  
Written by James DeMonaco, Todd Harthan and James Roday  
Maple

The simplest description of *Skinwalkers* is *Near Dark* meets *Underworld*—talk about a mixed bag. *Near Dark* is an original, gritty reworking of the vampire movie, while *Underworld* is a dumb, flashy teen flick that would rather be *The Matrix* than a horror film. Smash the two ideas together, substitute the originality of *Near Dark* for a convoluted Chosen One narrative and you've got something that should've gone straight-to-DVD.

In a furry nutshell, there are two groups of werewolves. The good werewolves live in the country, drive around in a pimped-out ice cream truck full of weapons (and harnesses so they can strap themselves in during full moon fever) and protect a boy, Timothy (Matthew Knight), who will soon have the power to cause chaos in the werewolf world. The bad werewolves are bikers who happily chew down on humans and really wanna kill young Tim—

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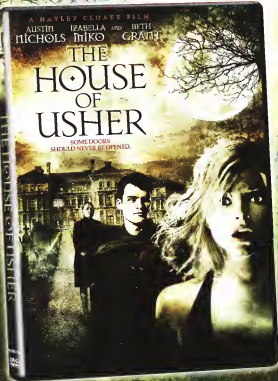
# A HAUNTING THRILLER BASED ON THE FAMED STORY BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

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*The Day After Tomorrow, Glory Road, Wimbledon*

**IZABELLA MIKO**  
*The Spiderwick Chronicles, The Fastlane, Coyote Ugly*

**AND BETH GRANT**  
*Flings of our Fathers, Little Miss Sunshine, Factory Girl*



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## NEFARIOUS GEORGE

### THE WASHINGTONIANS

Starring Jonathon Schaech, Venus Terzo and Saul Rubinek

Directed by Peter Medak

Written by Richard Chizmar and Jonathon Schaech  
Anchor Bay

Few horror fans don't like *The Changeling*: the chilling haunted house story starring George C. Scott and that terrifying little wheelchair. However, aside from that film, a handful of *Twilight Zone* episodes in the '80s and, um, *Species 2*, director Peter Medak hasn't done much in the genre, hardly qualifying him as a "Master of Horror." Nevertheless, here he is directing an adaptation of the Bentley Little story "The Washingtonians."

In the spirit of Washington himself, I cannot tell a lie: this episode sucks hard enough to strip the paint off your wooden teeth. Co-writer Jonathon Schaech stars as Mike Franks, a bland family man who inherits his grandparents' house in the area George Washington grew up in. Franks' grandfather was an antiques dealer, and when an antiquated family painting of the founding father is damaged, it reveals a gruesome ode to cannibalism — wrapped around a fork made of bone — signed "GW." When the locals catch wind of it, Mike, his wife Pam (Venus Terzo) and daughter Amy (Julia Turobian) become targets for The Washingtonians — a secret society of cackling, period-garbed cannibals dedicated to covering up the fact that America's first president had a raging lust for human flesh. Frank learns the horrible truth from his old history professor (played by Saul Rubinek) in one of many pace-killing exposition scenes.

The script is irritatingly obvious (with bad dialogue such as, "Eat me! Eat me, you sons of bitches!"), the performances worthy of a *Scooby Doo* episode and the gore props cheap and rubbery. The tired nods to movies such as *The Shining* are also rather embarrassing. And when you thought it couldn't get worse, the final scene features a truly offensive Asian stereotype.

Pick a culinary-themed description of "The Washingtonians": half-baked, undercooked, hard-to-swallow, tough to stomach — they all fit.

Dave Alexander



ply chew down on humans and really wanna kill young Tim — just as soon as they find him. The noble lycanthropes, led by Jonah (Elias Koteas in a nifty hairpiece), spend much of the film hiding from, outrunning and having over-the-top battles with the rebel wolfmen, led by Verek (Jason Behr). There are uninteresting revelations, cheesy gunplay and a prophecy plot — involving a "half-blood," an ultra-rare "blood moon" and an ancient native curse thingie — that only a werewolf could chew through.

The monster effects, which Stan Winston had a hand in, are decent given the budget, and director James Isaac (*Jason X*) tries to pump some energy into a bad script, but even then, some of the camera moves and edits are pointlessly over-stylized. Sucking the sexiness out of the Gothic monster mythology and replacing it with dust, shootouts and desperation is good in theory, but as John Carpenter's *Freaky* also proved, can fall flat if executed poorly. When all is shredded and done, *Sliverwalkers* is pretty tame stuff.

Dave Alexander

## BARBEAU VERSUS NAZI SCIENCE

### UNHOLY

Starring Adrienne Barbeau, Nicholas Brendon and Sin Badu

Directed by Daryl Goldberg

Written by Sam Freeman

Anchor Bay

This is one strange movie. Based on a "real" myth involving Nazis, black magic and government conspiracy in rural Pennsylvania, it's not so much the outrageous premise that makes *Unholy* such a satisfyingly bizarre experience, as it is the bazy style in which it's told.

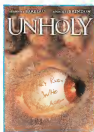
The film stars scream legend Adrienne Barbeau (*Creepshow*, *The Fog*) as ordinary housewife Martha, and a pudgy Nicholas Brendon (*Zander of Buffy* fame) as her slacker son, Lucas. Martha returns home one day to witness her daughter's shotgun suicide, hearing the girl's cryptic last words "Beware of the experiment" before the fatal shot. As Martha and Lucas delve into the mystery behind her death, they uncover the "Unholy Trinity" of time travel, invisibility and haunwashing, a demonic Nazi invention that seems to involve nearly everyone in their local community.

Despite some minor star power behind it, *Unholy* is obviously a low-budget affair. There's a handful of actors present and continuity is a problem (the amount of snow on the ground changes from scene to scene). Ironically, these quirks actually lend to the movie's appeal, giving it a dream-like and desolate atmosphere, not unlike Dante Tomasi's cinematic acid trip *Horror*.

It also takes a while to figure out what the heck is going on with the story as *Unholy* jumps headfirst into its bizarre mythology and never really establishes anything "normal" about the characters and setting. There's talk of Nazi experiments and black magic but we see very little of it onscreen. Is it actually going on somewhere in the background or is it all just a myth?

Eventually taking a cue from M. Night Shyamalan, the film offers up a satisfying twist to the mystery — the kind that warrants repeat viewings. Though it's not perfect, *Unholy* is not easily forgotten either, and for that it's one experiment worth taking part in.

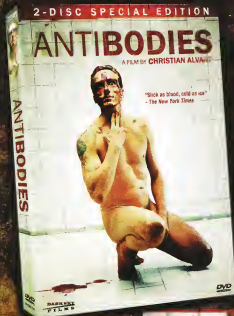
Aaron Van Lupton



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*"An entertaining thriller that puts its own spin on the... serial killer genre."*

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Berlin police apprehend the alleged killer of 13 children, but prime suspect Gabriel Engel (DOWNFALL's André Hennicke) will speak only to Michael Martens, a small town constable (ANATOMY 2's Wotan Wilke Möhring) whose own teenaged son is manifesting the classic early signs of a serial killer.

This tense, violent thriller from writer-director Christian Alvart (CASE 39) combines elements from the classic mind game thrillers THE WICKER MAN, THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, and SE7EN and was an audience favorite at the 2005 Edinburgh Film Festival.

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## OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED THIS ISSUE: LANCE SUFFERS BRAIN DAMAGE

HELL ALSO HATH NO CONTINUITY EDITOR

### HELL HATH NO FURY

#### Brain Damage Films

Though the DVDs released by Brain Damage Films usually have awesome covers, too often the movies themselves are a major disappointment. *Hell Hath No Fury* is one of them. It's a confusing anthology that desperately tries to intertwine stories dealing with vampires, transvestites, coffee shop cowboys and hot chicks taking revenge on rapists. The more it jumps around from scene to scene trying to be clever, the more annoying it gets. If it had been shot as a straightforward anthology it probably would have been salvageable and even enjoyable — maybe. I knew I had a real sick puppy on my hands when the girl I was watching it with told me she would rather stick a pen in her eye than finish it. Talk about collateral damage!

Body Count: 11

Mangled Penises: 2



### BACKWOODS BROKEBACK

#### THE GREAT AMERICAN SNUFF FILM

#### Brain Damage Films

Claiming to be based on a real-life serial killer and promising a clip of his actual snuff film at the end of the movie, *TGASF* follows two rednecks who capture a couple of girls in their junkyard then drug and torture them while filming their misery. Filmed in a grainy, jumpy Blair Witch style, it's thwarted by a droning narration track as one of the killers waxed poetic about making snuff films. As brutal as this movie may be, it never makes you feel truly uncomfortable because it constantly takes the focus off the victims and places it on the captors' relationship. Eighty-five mind-numbing minutes later I wasn't sure if the director was attempting a dark film or a horror version of *Brokeback Mountain*.

Body Count: 6

People Urinated On: 1



### BRING YOUR HELLBELLY KID TO WORK DAY

#### A DUTHERED CONSCIENCE

#### Brain Damage Films

As much as I playfully malign Brain Damage, sometimes they release a true gem, such as *A Dutered Conscience*. Set in the Arkansas backwoods, it tells the story of Keller McCarvin and his son Lucas, who patrol their heavily forested property, killing off trespassing hikers and hunters. The minimal dialogue and eerie soundtrack complement the panoramic exterior shots, imbuing each scene with desolation and loneliness. Props to director Dennis Smithers Jr., who cast his father as the lead. Dennis Smithers Sr. has a refreshing take on the redneck hillbilly killer stereotype, and his weathered face gives Lance Henriksen's visage a run for its grizzled money. The unexpected twist ending is another highlight and makes a movie like *Deliverance* look like a walk in the park.

Body Count: 13

Decapitated Drug Dealers: 2



### ARANG

Starring Yun-ah Song, Jong-su Lee  
and So-yeong Choo

Directed by Sang-hoon Ahn

Written by Sang-hoon Ahn, Seon-ju Jeong,  
Jeong-seob Lee, et al.  
Tartan Video



In many ways *Arang*, from first-time Korean director Sang-hoon Ahn, exemplifies the often-hard-to-define difference between the Korean ghost story film and its louder, more popular cousin in Japan. Though both subgenres are dominated by long-haired spirits avenging past-life crimes through high-tech gadgets, Korean ghost stories are generally slower paced and less reliant on dazzling camera and editing techniques.

The main difference between the two cinematic schools, however, is their treatment of character. Like their counterparts in American slash films, most of the fashionable twentysomethings in J-horror exist to get killed. If a character gets a back story at all, it's usually to connect them, however obliquely, to the horrific crime that began the cycle of paranormal revenge killings. But like other Korean tales of revenge huntings, such as *A Tale of Two Sisters*, *Whispering Corridors*, *Acacia* and *Memento Mori*, *Arang* uses the ghost story motif to explore the often hidden horrors of family and social conventions, and the terrible toll they exact on individuals.

This isn't to say that *Arang* skimps on blood and scares. The plot throws together a tough-as-nails female detective and her new partner, a bumbling slacker just transferred from forensics. Together they investigate a series of grisly killings in which the victims are suffocated by a nerve gas that appears to have entered their bodies from the inside. The victims are connected through an identical email they each received on the night of their respective murders from a strange website called Kim Min-jeong's Salt Village. The investigation eventually reveals a horrifying conspiracy involving rape, murder and police corruption in a remote village.

The actual murders and their ghostly perpetrator are somewhat derivative of other J- and K-horror films, but Ahn puts his own stamp on a few of the conventions, including pushing the visual possibilities of creepy long black hair about as far as they can go. What makes *Arang* so unsettling is the depiction of a group of believable characters driven to the limits of human endurance by an act of cowardice and evil.

James Grainger





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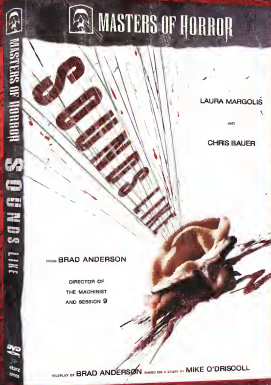
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FROM **BRAD ANDERSON**

DIRECTOR OF *SESSION 9* AND *THE MACHINIST*

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- **CHRIS BAUER** (THE WIRE, 8 MM)



In the months following his young son's tragic death, Larry Pearson's hearing intensifies until it becomes virtually superhuman. As Larry slowly begins to lose his grip on reality, he must take violent action to quiet the deafening clamor. How far will one man go to find the ultimate paradise of absolute silence?

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# REISSUES



Michael Reeves' gritty masterpiece stars Vincent Price as the sadistic Matthew Hopkins.

## NOT-SO-NICE PRICE

### WITCHFINDER GENERAL (1968)

Starring Vincent Price, Ian Ogilvy

and Hilary Dwyer

Directed by Michael Reeves

Written by Tom Baker, Louis M. Heyward,

Michael Reeves, et al.

MGM

Vincent Price was a notoriously gregarious soul. Even his most vicious onscreen characters were often undermined by his natural warmth, innate charm and (to put it kindly) theatrical ebullience. But in *Witchfinder General*, the beloved actor delivers the most malevolent performance of his long career.

This Tony Tenser-produced masterpiece of British horror deals with one of the nation's most horrible historical figures, Matthew Hopkins, the self-labeled *Witchfinder General*. It was in 17th-century England, which had been ripped

apart by civil war, that Hopkins found fame and fortune by torturing young girls and forcibly extracting from them confessions of dalliances with the Devil. He travelled from town to town to rape, punish and publicly hang his would-be witches in exchange for pieces of silver from the local officials.



Ironically, the film's 23-year-old wunderkind director Michael Reeves was furious that Price was cast in the role. He originally wanted Donald Pleasance but American International Pictures, who handled the US distribution, insisted on thrusting their famous contract star upon him. Reeves was so unhappy with Price that he brought the set to a screaming halt every time the actor launched into one of his trademark affectations. The director's complete lack of tact eventually got the better of the usually playful Vienne and what resulted is a remarkably restrained and delectably serious portrayal.

When AIP released the film in the US, they retitled it *The Conqueror Worm* to piggyback on the successful Cormon/Price/Poe franchise, even though the subject matter has absolutely nothing at all to do with Poe's meditation on mortality. And because of some unfortunate copyright issue, Paul Ferris' angst-ridden orchestral score was removed from all home video versions in the US and replaced with a wonky, slipshod synth track. Fortunately, we live to see these wrongs righted. The MGM DVD reissue features the original director's cut, the original score, a commentary track and an excellent 25-minute retrospective on the film.

Sadly, *Witchfinder General* remains the third and final film in the short, unhappy life of Reeves who died from a lethal cocktail of antidepressants and alcohol the following year and whose contributions to the genre, thanks to the hyperbolic tendencies of a number of film critics, have been mythologized to epic proportions.

Stuart Andrews

## HOOPER'S HOTEL HORRORS

### EATEN ALIVE (1976)

Starring Neville Brand, Marilyn Burns

and Robert Englund

Directed by Tobe Hooper

Written by Alvin L. Fast, Kim Henkel

and Mardi Rustam

Dark Sky

"Name's Buck. Rarin' to fuck." A decade before Robert Englund took up permanent residence on Elm Street, he had the first and most memorable line in *Eaten Alive*, Tobe Hooper's inferior but still watchable follow-up to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. On the receiving end of the above pleasantries is Roger Cormon regular Roberta Collins (*Death Race 2000*, *Caged Heat*) as a reluctant hooker whose steadfast refusal to indulge ol' Buck in Hershey Highway hijinks gets her booted from a backwater brothel in East Texas. The poor thing stumbles away seeking shelter, and things go from bad to fatal when she takes lodging at the Starlight Hotel. It's an almost comically skinny roach trap at the edge of a swamp, where she immediately runs afoul of dangerously unhinged owner Judd (Neville Brand).



The unhappy hooker is only the first casualty of the evening, as Judd, and his crocodile, dispatch other unwary travelers. Taking place over a single night, *Eaten Alive* unfolds at a sometimes too-leisurely pace—there's a lot of skulking about in the dark and a few too many trambled, delusional soliloquies from Brand. The exteriors are shot on a painfully obvious sound stage and Hooper's curious overreliance on orange and blue filters becomes tiresome. Yet he's as assured as ever when dishing out the ultra-violence, the highlight being a protracted scythe-through-neck death struggle that concludes in the croc's jaws.

Hooper had an impressive cast at his disposal here, cult film demigods and fading Hollywood royalty including Mel Ferrer (*War and Peace*), ingenues-du-jour Janis Blythe (Ruby in the original *Hills Have Eyes*), Kyle Richards, who would be babysat by Jamie Lee Curtis several years later in *Halloween* and TCM alumnus Marilyn Burns who ultimately walks away with top honors for ear-shredding wails.

Extras on Dark Sky's reissue—which was originally supposed to be released last year but was delayed when a better source print was found—includes actor and producer commentary, a Robert Englund featurette and a shoot on the incident that supposedly inspired the film. Hooper, as is often the case, remains conspicuously absent.

John W. Bowen

## TAKE MY LIFE... PLEASE!

### INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1978)

Starring Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams and Leonard Nimoy  
Directed by Philip Kaufman  
Written by W.D. Richter  
MGM

If, as film geeks and profs have been telling us for 50 years, the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*—based on Jack Finney's novel—was such a hit because it tapped into the democratic West's fear of creeping communism from without and



Pod people make terrifying simulacra of us in Philip Kaufman's remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

within, then why is Philip Kaufman's remake—set in the Me Generation 1970s—scarier and harder-hitting than its predecessor? And why does the remake still hold up today?

The best way to answer those questions is to watch Kaufman's version again. Although his re-imagining of the original plays on such updated cultural trends as the rise of conspiracy theories, the fascination with extraterrestrials and the failure of me-first '70s psychology to bring meaning to people's lives, the film gets its power by dramatizing a more primal fear, that you just might be the last normal person in the world, or worse, that all the droid-like straights sitting with you on the bus to work every morning are the normal ones and you're crazy. The film also helped launch the wave of slime-drenched, visceral explo-

rations of mutating flesh that defined some of the best horror films of the 1980s.

Another way to grapple with the film's particular power is to work your way through the bonus features of MGM's new two-disc collector's edition. Kaufman's new commentary track is insightful and funny, and there are a half dozen or so featurettes on the second disc worth checking out. Particularly good is the extended interview with sound designer Ben Burt, who devised the now-iconic screech that ends the film, and a new making-of feature that includes retrospective interviews with Kaufman, writer W.D. Richter, star Donald Sutherland and some other key players. Kaufman also lets viewers in on many of the film's playful nods to the original, including the cameo by Kevin McCarthy, who seems to have stumbled out of the 1950s to warn humanity that the godless pod people are taking over. How right you are, Kev.

James Grainger



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AFTER BEING LOCKED AWAY FOR DECADES, THIS MONTH '80s CULT CLASSIC **THE BURNING** ARRIVES ON OVO TO TEAR SLASHER FANS A NEW ONE.

# SHEAR TERROR

BY AARON LUPTON

**D**uring the slasher boom of the '80s – thanks to *Friday the 13th* – a lot of teenagers were killed in the woods during the hazy days of summer. Following in Mrs. Voorhees' footsteps, a rash of psychos flocked to the wilderness in slaughterthons such as *Madman* (1982), *Sleepaway Camp* (1983) and *The Mutilator* (1985). But few of these films were as nasty, or earned such a cult following as 1981's *The Burning*.

Based on the "real" urban legend of the Crosby maniac, *The Burning* tells the story of a summer camp caretaker who is burned beyond recognition during a prank gone wrong. Years later, armed with a pair of hedge clippers, he returns to a neighbouring camp to seek revenge on a new batch of kids.

Sticking to the then-popular stalk-'n'-slash template, the film is a textbook case of a movie made for money. It essentially served as Bob and Harvey Weinstein's first stab at the movie business before they founded Miramax Films, ironically, years before their Dimension Films production company resurrected the slasher genre with *Scream* (1996). Harvey co-wrote the script and produced, and to direct they hired UK filmmaker Tony Maylam, who had never made a horror film and was touring around a pair of "music-driven" movies he'd directed. They got the attention of Harvey, who was a rock promoter at the time.

"[Harvey] wanted to get into movies and so he licensed my two films and released them as *Sensash* in the US," says Maylam. "That went well and we then discussed making a movie together. *The Burning* was the result. I worked with them before they gained their heavy reputation for 'eating directors for breakfast.' They

left me alone and concentrated more on marketing the film, which I believe has always been their strength."

The film is also known for its cast of future movie and television celebrities, including Jason Alexander (*Seinfeld*'s George Costanza), Fisher Stevens (*Short Circuit*) and Holly Hunter (*Blood Simple*, *Crash*), who Maylam recalls "brought a lot of spontaneous enthusiasm to the set."

The real star of the show, however, is the ambitious effects work by Tom Savini, who turned down *Friday the 13th Part 2* to work on the movie, and delivered some of his most over-the-top carnage, most notably in the film's raft massacre scene. In mere seconds, a good chunk of the cast is sliced and diced by Crosby's garden shears – fingers go flying, a massive head injury is incurred and a throat is torn apart. Outside of the look of the hideously disfigured killer – conceived by Savini, Maylam and the Weinsteins – many consider this shocking, gory raft attack the film's greatest accomplishment.

"Shooting on water is always a challenge," explains Maylam. "For the main raft action we rigged our camera boat alongside the victims' canoes and went for it. Special FX, drums of blood with plungers, actors with expendable

body parts: oo! I would have liked to have gone much further but censorship at the time restricted what we could get away with. We were always aware of the need to get the film released, not only in the US but internationally."

Indeed, censorship proved to be *The Burning*'s bane, especially when a British video label accidentally released an uncensored version. It was added to the UK government's infamous Video Nasties list, meaning it could be pulled from shelves under the Obscene Publications Act. This only added to the film's dangerous reputation.

While Maylam would not go on to tackle any more horror projects, he says Crosby may yet rise from the lake again. "I've recently been

approached to make a horror movie based on the Crosby legend to be shot in the US later this year. I'm tempted. It has a fresh spin on the genre."

In the meantime, fans of the disfigured slasher can dig into *The Burning* special edition from MGM, which features a pristine, uncensored print of the film, a commentary track with Maylam and genre journalist Alan Jones, plus an insightful behind-the-scenes featurette with Savini. Twenty-five years after its release, Maylam admits there's only one thing about

the film he wishes he could change: "I'd have made it a shillload more scary." \*



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# VINTAGE HORROR REISSUES CINEMARQUEE

ONCE IT WAS HUMAN...

## THE FLY (1958)

Starring Vincent Price, Patricia Owens  
and David Hedison

Directed by Kurt Neumann

Written by George Langehan and James Clavell  
Fox

While genre films of the 1950s were often dominated by giant monsters that offered simplistic messages about atomic power gone freakishly out of control, Kurt Neumann's exceptional *The Fly* is a creature feature that's also one of the most heartbreakingly human horror/sci-fi outings of the decade. Just re-released as a part of *The Fly Classic Collection*, it evokes timeless themes of love and sacrifice, as a well-meaning physicist is inadvertently turned into an abomination of science.

*The Fly* begins as the body of Montreal scientist Andre Delambre (David Hedison) is found crushed under a hydraulic press. His wife Helene (Patricia Owens) acknowledges that she was responsible but refuses to explain why until her brother-in-law Francois (Vincent Price) pressures her to reveal the whole fantastic story. Through flashback, Helene tells of Andre's invention of the disintegrator-reintegrator, a machine able to teleport solid matter through the air from one chamber to another. Though his initial experiments on living tissue are a failure, resulting in the "mysterious" disappearance of the family cat, Andre soon decides to test the teleport device on himself. But when a housefly is mistakenly sealed in the chamber with the ambitious scientist, their molecules are scrambled together during the "transmutal" process, swapping several body parts between the two. Sporting the twitching proboscis and hairy claw of a fly, Andre implores his wife and young son (Charles Herbert) to help capture his other, insect self to reverse the process before the fly's instincts completely take over.

Framed as the mystery of Helene's motive for murder — and specifically her decision to activate the press twice — James Clavell's clever script makes full use of short story



Vincent Price co-stars in the enduring atom-age creature feature



author George Langehan's literary devices (though not the original downbeat ending, in which Helene's guilt drives her to suicide). Ostensibly, *The Fly* could be seen as yet another parable about atomic warfare, as an important scientific discovery yields evil consequences, but the film is much more effective as a nuclear family twist on the traditional *Beauty and the Beast* fable. Throughout Helene's confession, well-written, often emotional dialogue gradually reveals the depth of her relationship with Andre, which is then put to the test as she must kill her beloved husband and destroy all evidence of his ungodly transformation in order to save him.

Supporting these universal themes, journeyman B-film director Neumann, who unfortunately killed himself shortly after the premiere screening of the film, bookends the movie with two extremely forceful images. *The Fly*'s opening scene features an unforgettable long shot of the bloody hydraulic press, and the action climaxes with one of horror's most powerful cinematic moments: a fly, with Andre's head, caught in a web, screaming "heeeelp meeeel!" as he's attacked by a hungry spider. This still-shocking conclusion communicates the disturbing central concept in a much more effective way than the earlier, goofier fly-headed creature in a

hib coat, and helps *The Fly* stand out against more routine '50s monster flicks.

Despite some obvious campiness, an almost secondary role for Price and an emphasis on dialogue that may test the patience of even diehard monster fans, *The Fly* has climbed to the top of the atom-age horror heap through the combination of memorable imagery and a richly textured script that captures Andre and Helene's undying love as much as it does the intriguing and grotesque premise. This underlying pathos has also made *The Fly* a favoured target for reinvention: David Cronenberg's ingenious 1986 remake of the film will soon have company from another planned update under Fox's Searchlight Picture banner in 2008. There's also a *Fly* opera in the works, to be conducted by Plácido Domingo.

Even though *The Fly* was a huge box-office success on its original release, the film hasn't been treated very well on DVD, haphazardly paired on a budget-priced disc with the lesser sequel *Return of the Fly* several years ago. Fox has finally rectified the situation with *The Fly Classic Collection*, adding 1965's *Curse of the Fly* — previously as elusive as a white-headed blue bottle — as well as a fourth disc of extras, featurettes and insights on this literate horror trilogy, which is destined to keep the film's legacy buzzing around for years to come.

Paul Corupe

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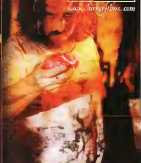
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**"CHOSEN SURVIVORS IS THE KIND OF '70s SCI-FI HORROR NIGHTMARE THAT MEN LIKE ME LOVE."**

# MAD THE MUSINGS OF A SCHIZOID CINEPHILE

by Chris Alexander

I will forever associate horror with the sweet, wonderful and wide-eyed innocent terror of my late-night TV-saturated childhood, those days when my native and easily impressed self would stumble across sublime slices of strange cinema that split open fantastic and macabre realities that potentially could (and in some cases most certainly do) exist. I'm also a card-carrying cultist of Rod Serling's classic show *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) and particularly gravitate towards tales with wild "what-if" set-ups and moral dilemmas, movies that stick regular dudes in arcane situations and force them to sink or swim. Oh, and did I mention I have a lifelong fear ofucking bats?

Taking all this into account, I'm going to lay out some much-needed love on a film that combines my late-night B-movie leanings, vintage TZ obsessions and acute bat-o-phobia into one skin-pricking piece of post-apocalyptic terror. I speak of the obscure 1974 micro masterpiece of subterranean fear, director Seltun Rokey's rarely seen *Chosen Survivors*.

The plot (recalling the great TZ episode "Five Characters in Search of an Exit" and, to a lesser extent, the much later *Cube*) revolves around a gaggle of unrelated men and women of various professions who wake up shocked to find themselves 13,000 feet underground in an antiseptic state-of-the-art bunker. Turns out they've been randomly selected by the government to survive a full-blown nuclear holocaust, the idea being that after the radiation ebbs, these lucky, biometrically sealed sluffs will re-emerge on the surface and reboot the human race. As the tragedy of their situation sets in and tensions mount, things get far worse when a legion of blood-hungry vampire bats from the bowels of a nearby New Mexico cave squirm their way through the ventilation shafts and do their damndest to suck the survivors dry. As



*Chosen Survivors: A subterranean "what if?" movie in the tradition of The Twilight Zone*

the hapless humans battle the aerial vermin, the truth about their hopeless situation comes out and it's a doozy. Meanwhile, the drooling bats just keep a-comin'.

My history with *Chosen Survivors* stems from a heart-stopping 3 a.m. TV viewing many years back, long before the internet made it easy to track down obscure cinema. I sifted through scores of reference books to get the lowdown on it and learned that not only was it not on video, but by all accounts barely anyone had seen it. I managed to track down a crusty looking 16mm bootleg, which I still own and cherish.

Recently I learned that MGM picked it up to chuck on one of their Midnight Movies double feature DVDs for a split release with Terence Fisher's *The Earth Dies Screaming* (out this month). As of this writing, I cannot vouch for the quality of that edition but I can

tell you this: *Chosen Survivors* is the kind of '70s sci-fi horror nightmare that men like me love, and it's filled with all the elements a good retro cult item requires. We get the lineup of has-been TV and second-rate B-movie (over) actors, the likes of which include Jackie Cooper (*The Little Rascals*, the TZ episode "Caesar and Me") and the great Bradford Dillman (*Bug*, *Piranha*, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*), kitschy faux high-tech *Star Trek*-esque set design, a primal, nihilistic score (courtesy of *Bad Ronald*'s Fred Karlin) and tons of ravenous red-eyed bats that just might make you bite clear through your bottom lip.

I'm positively flabbergasted at the lack of love for this title and can only hope and pray that a much-deserved cult following begins pronto. Fall in, fellow weird movie fans...the line starts here. Alexander out.



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# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

15c

## IN THIS ISSUE!

### WORRY DOLL

Matt Coyle, Matt Tor

### THIRTEEN STEPS #1

Phil Hester, Chuck Sefton and Kevin Meiser  
Disparate

### BLACK METAL VOL.1 TPB

Rick Spears and Chuck BB Orr

### BYRON: MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS

Karl Christian Krensholtz S.O.G

### MARVEL ZOMBIES VS THE ARMY OF DARKNESS HC

John Layman and Fabrizio Neves

Marvel/Disney Entertainment

### TAG TPB

Kathy Giffen, Kedy Charbonnet, Chae and Andy Kahn

BOOM!

When it comes to horror, there is arguably nothing better than having something to worry about. And Matt Coyle's *Worry Doll* certainly offers readers plenty of cause for concern – the best kind, the fully immersive kind. It is nothing short of a graphic masterpiece that takes sequential-art storytelling in a new direction. Roughly based on the Guatemalan legend of an under-the-pillow avatar that siphons one's troubles, *Worry Doll* succeeds on many levels but deserves plaudits most for its uniqueness of presentation, bolstered by the fact that it could only be properly orchestrated in the comic-book medium.

The story of *Worry Doll* is complicated. That said, it's still easily summarized without spoiling its contents: three (possibly conscious) dolls discover the family with which they are living brutally butchered and embark on an apparently aimless road trip that, go figure, only deeper immerses them in the very madness they are trying to deny/escape. Literally living in a suitcase, the question of who possesses the luggage becomes central to the dolls' story – not to mention the question of whether the valise itself is possessed or haunted. While not exactly qualifying as a *Rashomon* narrative (where several observers of an event have different but equally plausible recollections of it), *Worry Doll* nonetheless involves perspective-within-perspective and in its reading, the question of identity becomes key.

"The original inspiration came with the murder scene," Coyle offers. "As the book evolved to explore ideas of multiple selves and split personalities, the dolls began to represent the conflicting components of a troubled soul."

We've revealed too much as it is, but it quickly becomes clear that *Worry Doll* is more Lynch than *Child's Play*, more *Strange-Away* than *Full Moon Entertainment*. It's not surprising since Coyle is an avowed Lynch fan, and while he says *Lost Highway* and



*Evil in Small Steps: An astounding visual accomplishment, Worry Doll is composed of photo-real images rendered exclusively with fine-tip pen.*

*Erasershead* are his favourites, his book has more in common with *Blue Velvet* (albeit featuring evil toys), if only because *Worry Doll* makes sense if the reader is willing to put in the much-needed effort. Coyle additionally cites *Evil Dead*, *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, plus the works of the Brothers Quay, as inspirations. Certainly, *Worry Doll* could accurately enough be described as the Quays' *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies* gone slasher, though there's a great deal more to it than that. The core criterion here: "tapping into dream imagery like nobody else."

The layout has text on left-hand pages and images on right-hand pages; it's simply written in the style of an old-fashioned kids' book, but oh-so-darkly and maturely interpreted, making it all the more atmospheric.

"The idea of having something that looked like a children's book go very wrong appealed to me," confesses Coyle.

Interestingly, the narrative and the visuals in *Worry Doll* can read separately to form two different stories. While neither narrative is "correct," each can function independently. The prose involves the interview of a man who may be a prisoner, a patient or some-

thing else altogether, while the visuals follow the surreal journey of the dolls. Taken as complementary pieces of the same puzzle, their complicated and result astonishing.

Released this spring by upstart British imprint Mam Tor – publisher Liam Sharp, best known for DC's *The Possessed* and *Tenement* – *Worry Doll* was completed in 2004, after Coyle devoted some seven years to drawing its 33 astonishing plates "mostly an hour a night here, a couple of hours in the morning there." In other words, the man had a day job, two kids and a wife studying for a PhD.

But talk about dedication to vision: Coyle estimates that he spent 60 hours per plate, hand-drawing each photo-real page with a fine-tip pen, an approach that allowed absolutely no room for error. It's an astounding visual accomplishment and, not surprisingly, Coyle reports that many readers refuse to believe that the layouts are not Photoshop-manipulated.

"Why couldn't I have been blessed with a more economical style?" he asks. "That's just the way it turned out."

For more information on Matt Coyle visit [mattcoyle.net](http://mattcoyle.net)

# QUICK CUTS

REVIEWS BY GARY BUTLER, ERIC GRANT  
AND MARK NOYES

**Being a werewolf** must be a pretty crazy way to live (you know, all hungry 'n' homicidal once a month, normal the rest of the



time). In fact, it makes sense that all the monsters walking among us would need a therapy program – a twelve-step, at least! The new ongoing title *Thirteen Steps* sounds zany by its name alone (reinforced by the cover), but schizo's more accurate. Levity abounds and the art is clean and suitably cartoony, but go figure, this book has some serious teeth. The violence is feal and the werewolf protagonist's canine personality is practically a solipsist. A comic this imbalanced shouldn't work, but I for one am chomping at the bit for the next full moon. **GB**

**Meet twin twelve-year-olds** Shawn and Samir suburban outcasts and ardent acolytes of "the sweet, grim sounds of *Black Metal*," who play their latest Frost



Axe album backwards and get pitched into the middle of a bloody adventure filled with eldritch swords, dark prophecies and warning Hell Barons – much to their dark delight. With frantic art, action torn from this week's Saturday morning cartoons and goofy jokes that never undermine the genre's sincerely apocalyptic outlook, *Black*

*Metal* delivers typically bombastic dark fantasy themes from a tween point of view without ever casting Sam and Shawn as the "good guys." The whole thing is manic depressive, power-chord precise and disturbingly wholesome. **EG**

**The dangerous** (to know) premise of web comic-turned-TPB *Byron: Mad, Bad and Dangerous*: it's a loving lampoon of goth culture, featuring real vampires and a tortured protagonist whose mother gives him his miscarried Siamese-twin brothers in a jar for his birthday. The good: a delicious verbal standoff between two goth scenesters who trade Vincent Price barbs and flaunt their props, including a pet toad. The bad: though each individual panel is a visual treat, writer/artist Karl Christian Krumpal is a sloppy storyteller whose dialogue is so hard to follow that the whole plot gets needlessly muddled. Looking for a tebeaker? Gotta dig that shades-of-Mignola cover. **MM**

**No pride, here:** I admit that I expected *Marvel Zombies vs. Army of Darkness* to be the very definition of creative bankruptcy.



Two great tastes that sound good on paper? Ha! Imagine my surprise when I enjoyed this story every bit as much as Robert Kirkman's classic miniseries from last year. Writer John Layman not only brings credibility to the intersection of the two properties, but by story's end, he makes the *Evil Dead* connection indispensable. His comedic timing is superb as well, a one-two-three punch of Doctor Doom jokes with

"Domo arigato, Mr. Robot!" being just one example. On the art front, Fabiano Neves does an excellent job apring Sean Phillips. (But why Photoshop Ash's mug?) A quibble here, a quibble there, but bottom line: it's unfair to call this book "much better than it should have been." Because it's quite simply terrific. **GB**

**"Nothing more frightening than random."**

wryly comments one of the many vile, revenge-driven homicidal maniacs in Ken Giffen's two-story TPB collection *Tag* (the second story being the 10 one-shot). It's a great pairing, because these decidedly different horror tales are of a piece: both are clever high-concept takes on karma vs. will-to-power, both feature despicable protagonists acting so human and flawed that we cannot help but recognize ourselves in their horrible actions, and both are absolute page-turners that end with shocking twists worthy of their momentous builds. *Tag*'s first issue was just as glowingly reviewed (*RM* 58), but the full story hits home harder. It could very well stand as Giffen's finest hour, it's that perfect. **GB**



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**Match to flame:**  
The fictional paths to  
fahrenheit 451  
Ray Bradbury  
Gauntlet



vides a detailed chronology of where these particular tales fall in Bradbury's canon. Despite the inclusion of the novella *The Fireman* (which was eventually expanded into *Fahrenheit 451*) and the previously lost short story "Long After Midnight," the best parts of *Match to Flame* are the more unusual tidbits and curiosities that can be found within, such as correspondence between Bradbury and a young Richard Matheson, or facsimiles of Bradbury's typed stories (complete with handwritten notes and corrections). Through these, readers get a candid and fascinating glimpse into the mind of one of the greatest writers of our time. And what could make *Match to Flame* a more worthy read than that?

Sandra Kasturi

## dimensions behind the twilight zone

Stewart T. Stanyard  
ECW

The reason that *The Twilight Zone* retains, and even expands, its potent and devoted cult following is primarily because of the powerful vision of its creator, the late and indisputably great writer and media personality Rod Serling. It was Serling, a revealed television screenwriter even before he launched *TZ* in late 1959, who set the show's emotional dark fantasy/morality tale tone in stone and retained that level of quality control until the program's final season

five years later. And though there is a plethora of books out there that both celebrate the series and document the inner workings of Serling's world, author Stewart T. Stanyard's comprehensive *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* sports a definite edge.

Stanyard labels himself the ultimate *TZ* fan (he serves as a board member for The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation), and quips more than once during the book that over any other creative force, living or dead, the one person he would want to meet is Serling. Of course, as this is impossible, he decided many years ago to do the next best thing and began collecting as many interviews as possible in an attempt to "know" the writer and understand what made him tick. Thus, *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* presents an amazing array of peripheral personalities giving insight, among them Serling's widow Carol, pivotal *TZ* writer Richard Matheson (episodes "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," "Night Cull," etc) and actors Dennis Weaver ("Shadow Play") and Anne Francis ("The After Hours"). The most revealing conversation, however, is the lengthy chat Stanyard has with Serling's brother Robert (an acclaimed scribe in his own right) in which the elder Serling points a touching portrait of their multi-layered, occasionally volatile, familial and professional relationship.

Combing the back alleys in and around the show itself, the awkwardly titled *Dimen-*

While it's always great to see a new anthology of collected works from Ray Bradbury, a brilliant writer and grandmaster in both the speculative fiction and literary worlds, *Match to Flame* isn't exactly new, so perhaps "recollected" would be a more fitting term.

In his preface to the book, Bradbury states that his "interest in the burning of libraries goes back to when [he] was ten and eleven years old." So the "path" to his seminal *Fahrenheit 451*, which this collection seeks to examine, is in fact a long one, with many interesting additional tales of book burning and censorship along the way. Unfortunately, by collecting all these thematically linked stories in one volume, there is the tendency to bludgeon readers with the concept. In fact, even the most hardcore Bradbury aficionados may long for more varied fare from the author's archives just to cleanse their palates; he writes on such diverse subjects that this book seems almost unnecessarily restrictive.

*Match to Flame* opens with an introduction by William Touponce (a Bradbury scholar), which is interesting and thorough but a bit dry. Jonathan Eller's textual essay fares better as it has more verve and pro-

# The Grim Reader

## HOW TO SURVIVE A HORROR MOVIE

Seth Grahame-Smith  
Quirk

Writing a fright flick? If so, Seth Grahame-Smith's *How to Survive a Horror Movie* is a must-read. Caustic, hilarious and thorough, it deconstructs genre clichés from *The Seven Deadly Horror Movie Sins* ("Ugliness," "Vehicular Sex," etc.) to what to do if *Your Car Has Children in It* (stop one *Fire Up the Crop Duster*). Amazing design and illustration content. It is a must-own.

Dave Alexander

## ENCYCLOPEDIA HORRIFICA

Joshua Gee  
Scholastic

As its title suggests, *Encyclopedia Horrifica* investigates vampires, krakens, zombies, werewolves, ghosts, aliens and mummies, as well as psychic powers, superstitions and much more, all while being especially mindful of its intended tween audience. A fun blend of fact and fiction (and even comparisons between the two), this gorgeous hardcover wasn't disappointed.

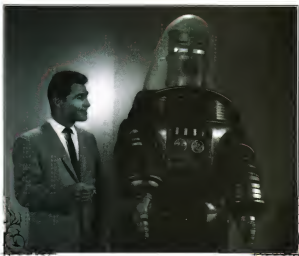
Marcia S. Kustbier

## YOU DON'T SCARE ME

John Farris  
Pops

When Chase was 15-years-old she was brutally raped and murdered by her mentally disturbed stepfather, who then committed suicide. Luckily, doctors were able to revive her. But they can't stop her killer from tormenting her from the afterlife. Farris' resolute dialogue and suspenseful writing elevates this tale above the mundane, making it a truly disturbing and frightening read.

Last Chance Lance



*Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone*: Stewart J. Stanyard's comprehensive book on the series

*Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* is a fan book, and as such it isn't likely to appeal to those not already deeply devoted to the Serling universe. But for those of us who swear by this maverick television show and think they know it inside and out, Stanyard's detailed and compelling collection of essays and Q&As is essential reading.

Chris Alexander

## The Darkening garden: A Lexicon of Horror

John Clute  
Paysaur & Schmitt

According to John Clute, co-editor of the massive *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* and this new slim volume of mini-essays, horror is the only literary (and cinematic) genre that is defined by the overwhelming emotional effect it has on its willing audience. Genres like mystery, fantasy and science fiction may dress up complex ideas and human aspirations and fears in fancy narrative boxes, but at its heart, horror exists solely to inspire a few visceral emotions that are not easily categorized or rationally explained away.

From this intriguing premise, Clute fills out the various shadings of horror, while providing a series of definitions for what horror is and what it most decisively isn't (fantasy, science fiction, etc.). The book is arranged as a lexicon of short essays which can be read alphabetically or in a loose ordering (suggested by Clute in his introduction) that serves to both build on and flesh out his central theme. Along the way, the reader is treated to a variety of evocative illustrations by such visual chroniclers of the macabre as Jason Van Hollander, Tara McPherson and Steven Weissman.

At its best, *The Darkening Garden* is high-brow brain candy for horror fans who are interested in the why of the genre: why it affects our emotions the way it does, why it came into its own precisely when enlightened Westerners were throwing off the shackles of religious superstition, and why, in our obsessively scientific age, we continue to seek out its irrational pleasures.

The book is gorgeously laid out and makes for a great late-night browse — especially in those moments where you just have to know the difference between terror and horror, or

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# IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY...

by Monica S. Kuehler

**W**hen the local paper mill closed then burned to the ground, Bedford, Maine became a ghost town. But something was left behind, something that still lives in the woods. Something ravenous. Something in search of a host.

Set in the fictional town of Corpus Christi, Maine, the tale concerns parasitic creatures that infect their hosts like a disease before maturing them. Stopped with believable characters, fully realized locales and genuine chills, *The Missing* (out this month from HarperCollins), Sarah Langan's follow-up to 2006's Stoker-nominated *The Keeper*, is one of the most powerful novels the genre has to offer this year. It also includes some major social and political commentary. Of the recurring themes in Langan's work, the concept of economic and social decay is always at the forefront.

"I think I just have a really strong sense of injustice and I see things in decline right now," explains Langan. "I'm so upset about it and I have no idea what to do. My book is about trying to put those feelings in some kind of context."

In this case, both the virus and monsters at the heart of *The Missing* serve as a thinly veiled metaphor for capitalism and consumerism. "It's not just where we are, but where we're headed," she elaborates. "And what capitalism does and what the end points of capitalism are. ... There's some scary stuff [out there], there always has been, I think maybe writers are more sensitive to it. Maybe we've always been on the cusp of ruin."

Lois Larken, one of the first characters readers meet in *The Missing*, certainly toes that line. After giving up a prestigious academic opportunity to return home to the small town she grew up in, she took a teaching job and got engaged to a local. Now, her fiancé has dumped her for her best friend and one of her students has vanished into the woods outside of Bedford while under her supervision on a school trip. Things have never looked more hopeless. Yet, as she stumbles through the brush looking for her young charge, she finds something else: a ring of bones, a mass animal grave and a voice that promises to make everything better.

Like the rest of the characters in *The Missing*, Lois Larken is flawed and just as likely to make a bad decision as anyone in the real world. It's that very imperfection that makes Langan's characters leap so believably off the page.

"I think I'm just really flawed and I think I'm writing about people that I understand, or I'm imagining what would happen if you did this to a person or that to a person," she confesses. "In *The Missing* the kinds of things that happen to these people, it's pretty understandable that they go off the deep end and that's more believable to me than some heroic person who's going to say, 'Oh, there's this virus and I'm gonna get my Rambo gun and save everybody.' Who does that?"

That said, there are no horror movie-style heroics in Langan's writing, nor are there any neat



conclusions. The plague in *The Missing*, despite its inhuman agent, spreads very much like a real virus would, and of course Langan, who holds a Masters degree in English and is an environmental toxicologist, has the ideal background to make it ring true.

"I was taking this class [at NYU], Organ System Toxicology and the ways different toxins effect different parts of the body, and immediately I was thinking, 'Well, what would a virus do?'" she recalls. "It's true we have the genetic codes of viruses in our DNA, some of which are symbiotic. I think we think we're in control of our bodies, and in fact these impulses that we have may occasionally be a foreign organism."

In the case of *The Missing*, the creatures get their traits not only from actual disease but also from some familiar horror archetypes, including vampires and zombies.

"I was really writing a book about consumption, this inability to stop eating, so it was sort of a mix of those things," explains Langan. "I think vampires are kind of sexy. I think they sort of embody the kind of appetites that I wanted to illustrate in the book — which is animal compulsion. Zombies are blind consumers, vampires do things because they are sensual, they do things because of a need or a materialism. I wanted to mix those two things, so originally it was vampires, but they weren't vampires... [so] what are they?"

Langan smartly leaves that up to readers to decide. ☼





## Laughing boy's shadow

Steven Savile

HWA Press

Declan Shea, the narrator of British novelist Steven Savile's *Laughing Boy's Shadow*, hates cities – and by chapter two, he has good reason. A chance encounter with a train and a car crash on his way home plunge Declan into the depths of Newcastle's Underground – a brutal underworld populated by beggars, ghosts and nightmare visions of J. Frank Burton's characters from *Oz*. Given a second chance at life by the mysterious Malachi, Declan is corralled into fighting for the soul of the city, damaged and rotten as it is. But the price of Declan's continued existence begins to spiral out of control, and the lines between good and evil blur until he finds himself committing increasingly ferocious acts in order to stay alive.

*Laughing Boy's Shadow* is a raw, gritty novel: part social commentary, part philosophy, part thriller. Its city, set in a city setting lends it to comparison with Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, but Savile's post-Trotter era cynicism makes his Newcastle a darker and less magical place than Gaiman's London, and his novel is also more politicized. Savile tangles his episodes of graphic violence skillfully, explaining clothes and shock tactics in fear of understated, detached narration, and the result is a genuinely chilling portrait of total alienation. Since the narrative is rooted in the fabric of Pragmatism, the story plays heavily on middle-class guilt around injustice; the world of Savile's beggars is merciless and pitiful, yet the author maintains the balance between fantasy and reality so that throughout the horrors that Declan experiences – and perpetuates – he remains recognizably human and, significantly, at the mercy of circumstance. In *Laughing Boy's Shadow*, the line between Newcastle and its Underworld is dangerously thin; you can cross it almost without knowing it, and once you do, there is no guarantee you'll be able to go back.

It is unfortunate then that an irritating number of mistakes eluded the proofreader of this review, which detracts from an otherwise strong and passionate work of fiction. Savile's novel is original, smart and well-written, his disturbing images and bleak prose are both thought-provoking and genuinely unsettling.

Justine Warwick

can't stop wondering why so many twins show up in horror stories. Occasionally the prose descends into head-scratching academic language, but such lapses in a short, entertaining book are ultimately forgivable.

James Grainger

## The female of the species: tales of mystery and suspense

Joyce Carol Oates

Harvest

Joyce Carol Oates' collected parables of feminist dystopias instill the reader with a creeping sense of dread. Quite simply, no one can conjure domestic creepiness and everyday crime the way Oates can, yet still make it haunting, elegant, even gorgeous in the midst of the grue. With each turn of phrase, the reader becomes ever more aware that something unpleasant is coming. As such, you find yourself hoping that you're wrong, that perhaps things will work out nicely; but they don't.

While much of this nine-story collection is not horror in the classic sense (i.e. related to the supernatural), it certainly imbues the concept of horror in a different manner. Oates' stories focus on alienation, isolation and sorrow. Yet, the women in these tales are far from helpless. Many of them, like the vicious Doll in "Doll: A Romance of the Mississippi" are brutal and very much in control of their own lives, despite the horrific circumstances – which the reader is then forced to imagine – that have led them down these particular paths.

Often, what is left unsaid is what is most truly terrifying about Oates' prose. For instance, the first story in the book, "So Help Me God," unfolds slowly enough that the reader is almost lulled into a sense of ease. But Oates' omissions lurk in the corners of the tale, staring the hairs on the back of your neck, until you know that even the best possible outcome won't be a conventionally happy one.

"Madison at Guignol" is the most traditional horror story here, but despite its spectacular violence and grotesquery (Guignol indeed!), it also feels like the weakest of the bunch. Only due to the fact, however, that the rest of the tales are so wonderfully strong.

Oates is clearly at the top of her game here and one of her greatest gifts as a storyteller is her sense of pacing, her ability to let each story unfold, petal by petal, like some sort of camouflaged lotus. So even when you sense the inexorable denouement coming toward you, you're still paralyzed, mesmerized by what's headed your way, and as the trap snaps shut, you feel grateful for having experienced craftsmanship of this calibre. A graceful juxtaposition of beauty and beastliness.

Sandra Kasturi



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# WARNING!

## TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA  
BY SAM COSTELLO



**T**here's a castle nestled in a quiet North Philadelphia neighborhood. Despite the 30-foot walls surrounding its eleven acres, you wouldn't even suspect Eastern State Penitentiary is there unless you turned onto the street it dominates to confront its imposing facade. Although hidden now, when it was built, Eastern State stood atop a hill, easily seen from Philadelphia's center. It was designed to look like a castle in an attempt to scare the populace into not committing crimes that would land them inside. It's hunkered down about five blocks from City Hall and the art museum (its famous steps seen in *Rocky*). The once-abandoned, partly ruined, 170-year-old prison is a museum by day, but by night – from September 21 to November 3



this year – it also hosts one of the nation's best haunted houses.

These days, visitors enter Eastern State through its imposing gate and head down a narrow, low-clearance tunnel that leads to the admission area. (If you're over six feet tall, get ready to hunch.) Before entering the prison, visitors sign an insurance waiver. While this is a legal requirement – the place is a partial ruin, after all – it's also great marketing and starts the visit off on an appropriately nervous foot.

Waiver signed and admission paid, visitors are outfitted with a self-guided audio tour narrated by actor Steve Buscemi, who once scouted the prison as a film location (staff-led tours are also available a few times a day). Though Buscemi didn't shoot there, many others have: Eastern State appears as the insane asylum in *12 Monkeys*, for example.

Visitors exit the ticketing area up a short set of stairs and emerge into the yard where the prison's buildings sit and the audio tour begins. Philadelphia's skyscrapers, just a few blocks away, aren't visible from most parts of the open-air courtyard thanks to the gloomy moss-crusted walls. Men, and a few women, were imprisoned here for the usual crimes: robbery, forgery, burglary, murder, horse theft. During "Twilight Tours" in the summer months, some former inmates and staff return for special Q&A sessions with visitors, which detail what life was like at the prison.

The museum, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., preserves the site's state of ruin in some areas and in others, features cellblocks restored to the way they looked circa 1839 when the prison was opened.

Even though it's a museum, forget about quiet rooms and being warned not to touch – it's a hands-on experience. There are no

glass cases full of antiques at Eastern State, you walk through drafty cellblocks, stray into narrow, dank cells and are invited to explore nearly every nook of the grounds.

Designed on a hub-and-spoke model, each of the prison's long cellblocks radiate out from a central area. This "Surveillance Hub" offers an unobstructed view down the corridors, allowing guards to look down each cellblock just by turning around. As the years passed and the prison's population increased, more buildings were added.

The philosophy behind the place was to use quiet contemplation to make inmates penitent. Prisoners were housed one to a cell, allowed outside an hour each day in private exercise yards, given just a single tiny skylight and offered only the Bible to read. Conversation was prohibited and guards wore wool socks over their shoes to dampen noise while walking the halls. When prisoners were taken out of their cells, they wore hoods that prevented communication.

Breaking the rules was a bad idea. Punishments ranged from the expected to the Gothic. Among the more unusual torments – not mentioned on the tour, but confirmed as authentic by museum staff – were the tranquilizing chair and the iron gag. The tranquilizing chair was used to tie inmates so tightly they could scarcely move, and the iron gag clamped over the inmate's tongue and was attached to his wrists while they were held behind his back. Movement could tear the tongue, and one inmate even died in the device.

By the time Eastern State's most famous inmates – Al Capone, whose lavish cell is featured on the tour, and Willie Sutton, who robbed banks "because that's where the money is" – arrived, those punishments had been replaced with more conventional measures. Solitary confinement (underground, in this case) and strait-jackets were common.

The prison closed in 1977 and for many years was simply abandoned. Before it reopened in 1994 as a tourist attraction, it was used as housing after riots in nearby prisons and as a warehouse for the Philadelphia Streets Department. These days, most cullblocks in Eastern State are in a delirious, atmospheric state of decay. Plaster cracks off the walls and piles up on the floor. Vaulted ceilings create echo chambers and rusted equipment litters the place. With the peeling paint, rotting furniture and falling plaster, the past strips off every surface. And it's being kept that way. The administrators of the historic site want to stabilize the architecture, not restore it.

This is where the haunted house attraction Terror Behind the Walls comes in. Along with offering top-notch scares, it's also the chief fundraiser for preserving the prison. The Terror construction team goes to great lengths to preserve the structure. This includes building false floors, new walls and wedging sets into place—not drilling or screwing them. About 130 people work at the haunted house each year to take tickets, design makeup and lurk in the shadows scaring patrons.

Terror Behind the Walls consists of five areas spread throughout the prison. Each year at least one haunt is replaced and minor changes are made to the others to keep the event fresh. This year, haunts will include Intake, a queuing area held in the courtyard where visitors wait in line, go through security, and see a few scary sights to set the tone; Maximum Security, a post-apocalyptic cullblock taken over by prisoners; Thirteen Rooms, a series of grisly trips to the morgue, kitchen and mad doctor's infirmary; Nightwatch, where visitors wielding flashlights make their way through near-pitch darkness; and The Experiment, a tripped out 3-D area.

The designers of the haunted house stress scares over gore and employ the prison's dark cells, creepy atmosphere and narrow passageways to maximum effect. Cells disgorge crazed inmates, shadowed figures hang limply from walls until people walk by and are grabbed at, overhead cubbies hide monsters that rain sparks down on crowds below and floor grates discharge ghouls.



*Paranormal Prison: A "ghost" inmate is chained carefully to a wall (photo: Andrew Gans), (above) the gates of the Eastern State Penitentiary (photo: Randall Wiles), (opposite) a vintage barber's chair (photo: Michael Cevad) and the pen's foreboding facade (photo: Tom Demay).*

A trip through the attraction takes 35-45 minutes. Visitors wrap up their trip in another section of the courtyard with an after-haunt party featuring DJs. From entering the prison to doing the monster mash, the whole experience takes an hour and a half to two hours. Whether you're seeking the scares of a haunted house or the chill of delving into Eastern State Penitentiary's dark history, there's more than enough to keep aficionados of the dark and wicked riveted day and night.

Eastern State Penitentiary is open from April to November and located at 22nd St. and Fairmount Ave., Philadelphia, PA. Tickets range from \$4 to \$8. More information at [easternstate.org](http://easternstate.org) or by calling (215) 236-5111. Terror Behind the Walls runs most nights from Sept. 21 to Nov. 3. Tickets cost \$20 to \$30. More information, schedule, and online tickets at [easternstate.org/halloween/](http://easternstate.org/halloween/).

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# THE GORE-MET

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### EBOLA SYNDROME

Starring Anthony Wong, Law Mong  
and Chan Miu-Ying  
Directed by Herman Yau  
Written by Ting Chau  
DiscoTek

Of all the infectious disease and public health scares of the last 30 years, none is more horrifying than Ebola. It has a high mortality rate and no known cure. The first symptoms are uncontrollable vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Weeping sores then appear all over the body. When death is imminent, Ebola victims begin bleeding from every orifice as their internal organs liquify. That's the popular depiction of the ravages of the disease; in truth, the symptoms aren't quite so dramatic. The threat of a large-scale Ebola epidemic is actually rather remote, but that hasn't stopped resourceful filmmakers from exploiting our fear of such a disgusting demise.

Hong Kong director Herman Yau and superstar Anthony Wong, the duo behind the quintessential Cat III (Category II, the Hong Kong adult film classification) shocker *The Unfold Story* (1993), reunited three years later for another Cat III classic, the outrageously tasteless *Ebola Syndrome*.

Wong pulls out all the stops as Kai, a ruthless sociopath and two-bit hoodlum caught in the opening scene having sex with the wife of his gang boss. As punishment, the boss is going to give Kai a quick garden shears penectomy. Kai offers to lop it off himself, but when handed the shears turns on his tormentors, unleashing some explosive garden shears/machining table ultra violence! After stomping the boss' head into a bloody pulp and cutting off the wife's tongue, Kai finds their little daughter hiding in another room. He's interrupted while trying to set her on fire (!) and escapes into the street.

Ten years later, Kai is working as a cook in a Chinese restaurant in Johannesburg. He's over-



Herman Yau's Cat III classic is a disgusting buffet of brutality and bloodshed.

worked and underpaid and abused mercilessly by the owner's wife. While on a road trip with the restaurateur into the African savannah to pick up some cheap pork from an Ebola-ravaged village, Kai rapes a wandering villager, who pukes in his face. He later collapses at work, but is such a bastard he survives Ebola! Angry that the owner and his wife were going to leave him for dead in the woods, Kai slaughters them, grinding their flesh into the next day's special: "African pork burrs!" When customers start doing the funky chicken in the streets, their illness is traced back to the restaurant by public health officials. The little girl Kai tried to immolate a decade before finds him there (his scent makes her nauseous!) and notifies the local police. At which point, he leaves Africa to spread a little Ebola back in Hong Kong.

Cat III films are noted for their sex and violence quotient, and *Ebola Syndrome* is certainly a platinum example of that. Yau also underscores the onscreen mayhem with a streak of jet-black humour, however, and Wong's performance is the principal attraction here. Whether he's masturbating with a pork chop, making completely offensive observations about Africans or ramming a toothpick dispenser into someone's eye, it's his show.

*Ebola Syndrome* was previously available as an import from HK distributor Universe Laser & Video. That disc features a fuzzy and muddled non-anamorphic transfer, the theatrical trailer and two unrelated trailers as the only extras. DiscoTek's new DVD trumps it on all counts, sporting a brand spankin' new, remastered 16 X 9 anamorphic transfer and a slew of extras, including an English-subbed, Cantonese language commentary track with Yau and Wong, an excellent fifteen-minute interview with Yau, the theatrical trailer, a photo gallery and... the "lost" deleted footage!

You was forced to remove two-and-a-half minutes of nasty gore and mayhem — notably from the cranial crush segment in the opening scene and grueling face removal in the third act autopsy — to appease HK censors. This footage was thought missing or destroyed, but here it is. Unfortunately, it only appears as an extra. (Says DiscoTek, "We weren't given the option to edit it back in, we were lucky enough just to be able to get the footage.")

DiscoTek have assumed no small risk releasing a title that has been widely available on DVD for several years, but they've done the only thing they could: release the definitive version. Whether a double-dip or an introduction to the perverse pleasures of Cat III films, this is an essential purchase. **A**

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a film by rodrigo gudino

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## BLUWOLF

### Cryptic Revelations

OSCARO

This self-proclaimed "death punk" outfit, fronted by vocalist The Reverend Jimmi Sinn and completed by members America Nightmare and Donnie (and Dave) of the Dead, looks like the aftermath of an explosion in Poison's makeup kit. But their musical homage to the heyday of dirty, Satan-worshipping thrash metal blends Slayer's *Show No Mercy*-era outlaw earnestness with Kreator's voracious attack and Sodom's gritty substance. Songs such as "Slaughtered Lamb," "Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things" and "Night Breed" reek of ghoulish danger as much as they do hilarity. Musically, *Cryptic Revelations* may aspire to be the little brother to Municipal Waste's *Hazardous Mutation*, but its lyrical themes of evil mindings and ghastly dismemberment are far more entertaining than mutants driving garbage trucks. **KC** **4.5/5**



taken seriously. Regardless, they should draw plenty of attention amongst online horror circles for being the punk rock project of none other than horror journalist Johnny Butane of DreadCentral.com. With Butane handling vocal duties, the band drops horror-themed tracks such as "Werewolf of Love," "The Beyond" and "Aim for the Head" alongside others about such timeless topics as bad girlfriends, getting drunk and Shakira's delicious booty shakin' skills. It's DIY sounding as hell and Butane's vocals are not particularly impressive, but the dirty, diesel-driven guitars and tongue-in-cheek lyrics make it worth a listen or two. Listen for the cool old school Motels reference in "Bastard Child of a Drunken Night in Quincy." **AVL** **3.5**



## THE HORRENDOUS ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Self-titled

MVD Auro

This one's a bit of an enigma. Apparently, Horrendous Acts of Violence is really AWOL One, which is really California MC Tony Martin. He calls this project "electro-death-hop" which is, of course, something he made up. Still, the mysterious appearance of dark, dangerous dance music coming from the hip-hop underground is worth investi-

Electro

gating, especially when it sports song titles such as "Breakdead" and "Eddiemunstershuffle." These eleven short instrumental tracks prove to be less horrendous and violent than promised, yet quietly unnerving in their cacophony of squelchy synths, crackling beats and shivering rhythms. Not really one for the dance floor, but it might crop you out on headphones slumbering home in the wee hours. **LL** **3.5**



## NECROMONDO

Necromondo

Mechanose Labs

All manner of rotary drones, industrial hums, machine buzzes and electro pulses ebb and flow, grind and churn throughout eleven unsettling ambient tracks on Necromondo's first full-length self-titled release. Embellished with titles like "Flesh Eater," "A Fistful of Intestines" and "Soaked in Blood I—II," this is bad craziness at its finest. Jokes, incorporating anvil strikes, scrapes, moans, percolating synth lines and "field recordings from contaminated areas," Necromondo has sewn together a rich, digital quilt of stark, atmospheric paranoia, even if it does grow repetitious after a while. Apparently inspired by '70s and '80s Italian horror films, this is sure to give you nightmares if you fall asleep with the headphones on. Pump this outside at Halloween and you're guaranteed to see at least a few kids "tricked" into shitting their pants. **TT** **3.5**

Industrial

## AFTER DARK

### Ghostriding (Shadows in the Dead of the Night)

DEADEN

New York's metal splatterheads After Dark ditch the usual gresstail horror-punk trappings for a straight-ahead, shoot-the-hostages thrash 'n' roll attack. The preposterously titled *Ghostriding (Shadows in the Dead of the Night)* is the band's second EP, and it's chock full of Southern-fried riot metal in the grand Pantera tradition, peppered with some unhinged Slayer-esque speed metal. Opener "The Unknown" is a vicious slash of punchy redneck psychedelia that extols the virtues of zombie lust, and things only get uglier from there. Downside? Well, it's less than twenty minutes long, and even with this brevity, After Dark's sheer will to provoke may prove too gnawling for most. But if your tastes run towards berserk mosh pits and ultra-violent horror flicks, After Dark may be your cup of que. **KM** **3.5/5**



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For fifteen years the Japanese horror-punks in **BALZAC** have devoted themselves heart, soul and skull to The Misfits.

# FIENDS FROM THE FAR EAST

by Trevor Tuminski

Everybody knows that Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but who knew pure devotion could lead to a record deal on a label run by your heroes? Japan's Misfits devotees Balzac sure do. The long-running group is the East's version of the legendary New Jersey-horror-punk band, cribbing a look and style originally forged by the Glenn Dango-fronted dungeon dwellers in the late '70s. Instead of landing themselves in legal hot water, though, Balzac earned themselves the Misfits' unholy blessing — an ear-ringing endorsement that would eventually lead to joint tours in the US and Asia, and a spot on the Misfits' own record label, Misfits Records.

"I didn't think it was possible to have a sound cooler than the Misfits," gushes Hiroaki Nishiyama, Balzac's frontman (and sole original member), who actually sings in more of a throaty snarl than Dango's trademark croon. "The way I saw it, the Misfits were totally different from every other band out there. I had been a huge fan of horror movies since a really young age and the Misfits combined that horror movie image with a great sound."

After playing in what was, essentially, a Misfits cover band called Astro Zombies, Nishiyama formed Balzac in 1992, naming the group after 19th-century



French novelist and playwright Honoré de Balzac, who he enjoys reading. After releasing some demos, the group put out its first album, *The Last Man on Earth*, in '96, just as Jerry Only was reforming the Misfits. As fate would have it, the two bands ended up on the same bill in Balzac's hometown of Osaka back in 1997, with the American edition adopting more of an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude than one might expect in the often

ego-driven world of the music business. A full-scale tour together followed and in 2000, a Misfits/Balzac split CD on Misfits Records.

Around this time Balzac introduced its twist on the classic Misfits Crimson Ghost mascot, the bloody Paperbag Man — something, Nishiyama asserts, he's never really explained in an interview, until now.

"We thought it would be cool if we hid our faces behind these paper bags," he reveals. "That year we were on a lot of fashion magazine covers and appearing on TV too. We wanted to do something different. We are punks, not fashion models. I think our horror image actually grew a lot after we put the bags on. The fans totally got into it as well. The last few years we have been covering our faces with bandannas featuring our jams, or in English, 'dark' logo [a deadly-looking hybrid of traditional Japanese scripture and the Misfits fiend skull]. So, covering our faces is a theme for us, that's for sure."

Culling additional inspiration from bands like Samhain and The Damned, and North American horror films *The Omen*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and Nishiyama's personal fave *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Balzac infuses those influences with the same brand of sonic ferocity that launched their forefathers so many years ago, all while singing in both English and Japanese.

"We learned a lot from the Misfits," admits Nishiyama. "I totally respect Jerry, after all, he is like the father of Balzac! He gave us a lot of opportunities and

chances to perform with them, which was very cool. I always am so thankful for everything he has done for us."

Over the years Balzac has released scores of horror-themed material on over a half-dozen albums, undergoing — like the Misfits — several membership changes in the process. (Nishiyama is currently joined by guitarist Atsushi Nakagawa, bassist Akio Imai and drummer Takayuki Marabe.) Now celebrating their fifteenth year, the group has just released *Deep Blue: Chaos from Darkness*, which is also available in a limited edition deluxe version with extra tracks, a hardcover book and bonus DVD.

Like the Misfits, Balzac regularly releases special edition albums and singles, and has expanded into clothing, posters and toys.

"I think we are always trying to be ahead of the game in Japan," explains Nishiyama. "Music is not the only thing important in a band, a lot of it is about image. That's part of the fun too." ☼





# PLAY DEAD



GRAPHICS



PLAYABILITY



SHIVERS

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE.

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE



## VAMPIRE RAIN

Xbox 360

AQ Interactive

Mankind is in a bind: the vampire population is growing fast, threatening to put us on the endangered species list. Luckily, an elite team of soldiers called Anti-Nightwalkers has been assembled to help us bite back.

It's been discovered that the bloodsuckers' senses are dulled by rainfall – so your team is sent into the labyrinthine streets of Manhattan during a heavy downpour. Reminiscent of stealth games *Spinter Cell* and *Metal Gear Solid*, players utilize a simple map and compass control system to navigate twenty mission levels, trying to locate a kidnapped scientist and find the hidden lair of the head vampire. Because of their superhuman strength and aggressive nature, most of your time will be spent trying to avoid battle. If you are discovered they will kill you, so be prepared to die – a lot.

Weaponry is standard military issue with a few new gadgets, such as Necrovision goggles, which allow you to locate bloodsuckers in disguise, and a UV knife that turns them into briquettes in seconds.

Though it's a wonderfully rendered game that positively drips with blood and eerie atmosphere, it's hampered by copious cut scenes and lame missions, such as having to climb to a rooftop and destroy a bunch of crates(?). If you want to stop with all of the sneaking around, switch to multiplayer mode, which allows up to eight people to play online death match games. Honestly, there's no better feeling than pumping some lead into the undead.



## NIGHT'S DARK MASTERS: A GUIDE TO VAMPIRES

RPG Sourcebook

Black Archives

In the world of vampire RPGs, players have to make a tough decision: either become one of the beautiful, undead creatures of the night or take up arms to wipe their vile presence from the Earth.

Night's Dark Masters is Warhammer's newest fantasy role-playing sourcebook and takes an exhaustive look into the secret realms of the vampire. Each superbly illustrated chapter slowly unfolds like a delicate ancient tapestry detailing every facet of vampire (un)life, including their origins, bloodlines, enemies and plans for the future. Also included are comprehensive accounts of battles with vampires and advice for those who decide to do take them on.

No matter which side you choose, this sourcebook will prove itself to be an indispensable guide to creating wondrous and frighteningly realistic adventures, and will surely earn a hallowed place next to your wooden stakes and holy water.



## THE DARKNESS

PS3, Xbox 360

Starbreeze

Remembered to be in development for quite some time, *The Darkness*'s 1996 comic book. The Darkness has finally made the leap from print to gaming platform.

Assuming the character of anti-hero Jacker Estacado (a former mob hitman who has inherited demonic powers), you'll fight vicious gangs of thugs in the incredible photo-realistic streets of New York City. Your powers enable you to shred your foes to bits with anguished tentacles and jagged teeth that burst from your shoulders and back. They can also help you see in the dark, unlock doors and survive repeated attacks. Plus, you can improve your powers by tearing out your enemies' hearts and eating them.

Though there are some AI problems and the controls are a bit sluggish, *The Darkness* does feature a great soundtrack and some superb voice acting by Faith No More frontman Mike Patton (as Jacker). Duty-free time to embrace the darkness.

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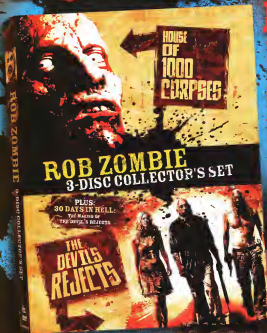
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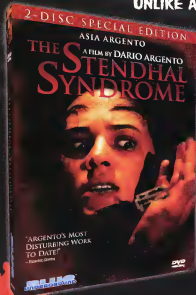
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